

S E R M O N S

O N

Several Important Subjects.

By WILLIAM FARINGTON, B. D.

Late Rector of WARRINGTON and
Vicar of LEIGH.

W A R R I N G T O N:
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S E R M O N S

Several Important Subjects



BY WILLIAM WATKINS, D.D.
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
F.R.S.

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S E R M O N I.

Man an accountable Creature.

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S E R M O N I.

ROM. xiv. 12.

EVERY ONE SHALL GIVE AN ACCOUNT
OF HIMSELF TO GOD.

“ **F**OR what end or purpose are
“ we come into the world? Are
“ we to live at large, as accident
“ or passion blindly drive us; or are
“ there any stated laws to controul and
“ regulate our conduct?”

EVERY man should put this question to himself, upon the first dawnings of knowledge and reflexion. Grown up to maturity, in the ferment of swelling passions, and in a world presenting a thousand things around us to inflame and gra-

tify our desires, we are too apt to consider ourselves as our own masters. *Who* (cries licentious appetite) *is the Lord, that I should obey him; or the Almighty, that I should serve him?* I know no superior, no law but will; no restraint, but want of power to compass my desire. Under this impulse, we take our different courses: one pursues his pleasures through the most sacred and endearing relations; another buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong, oppresseth the weak, defraudeth the innocent, and supplanteth his dearest friend to accomplish his selfish designs. The great contest is, who can get most of the good things of life for himself: we disturb and convulse the world with our competitions.

IT is true, we have the power of committing all these outrages. But let us not mistake indulgence for privilege, or a discretionary power for a full and absolute right. For though, O ignorant man,

man, God permits thee, for many wise reasons, *to walk in the ways of thy heart and the sight of thine eyes*, yet he, by no means an idle spectator of the world, looks down from above, observes thy actions, and *for all these things will bring thee into judgment*. Eccles. xi. 9. FOR EVERY ONE MUST GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD.

I. WE need only consult our common feelings and experience to convince ourselves of the power and superintendence of Providence. We feel the Maker in every state of life, and we see him in every object around us. We come not into the world of ourselves: we come without our knowledge, and leave it without our choice. While we live, we live and move and have our being in some superior agent. We are but mere instruments in the very actions that support our life. The heart beats, the lungs respire, the vital fluid circulates, without our concurrence, or even with-

out our consciousness. Matter, dead and inanimate matter, can do nothing of itself: it belongs only to intelligence to act with purpose and design.

HE, who thus forms us and so carefully supports us, cannot be indifferent about our conduct and behaviour.

II. WHAT the sinner places his firmest confidence in, happens to be one of the most alarming considerations. He sees things roll on in a seemingly promiscuous manner; judgment seldom arrests the transgressor; the virtuous as often falls into affliction. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* Eccles. viii. 11. But this of all things should most alarm their fears. The present patience of God should make them dread the heavier punishment in the time of visitation.

HE teaches us this in what we see around us. In nature we see an unusual stillness precedes his visitations, the ravaging

vaging tempest, or the earthquake that lays whole towns in ruins. In the animal kingdom the creature, that is slowest to anger, is the fiercest in its rage. Long suffering and clemency in man, when it takes up the arms of justice, is proportionably severe in its inflictions. And though wrath has no place in the Divine mind, yet something analogous to the passions necessary for the support of order here, must have place in his government.

III. WHEN we see an earthly magistrate acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent, advance the worthless and oppress the virtuous; every heart burns with indignation, every tongue is loosened to load him with execrations. Now only allow, that GOD* has as much justice in him as man, that he, who gave us no-

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tions

* HEUS, age, responde, minimum est quod scire laboro :
De Jove quid sentis ? estne, ut præponere cures
Hunc cuiquam ? cuinam ? vis Staio ?——

PERSIUS.

tions of equity and order, cannot want this perfection himself; and then we must allow with the apostle, that the present forbearance and goodness of God is only *meant to lead us to repentance*, but that a time must come when he will *render to every man according to his deeds*. Rom. ii. 6. There are many reasons why his sun should shine and his rain descend indifferently on mankind at present: but a future impartial distribution of rewards and punishments is necessary to justify his ways to man, and place vice and virtue upon their true foundations.

IV. IF we turn our eyes from without and survey ourselves within, we find proofs of our future destination in the frame and constitution of our nature.

IT is demonstrable that the power of reflexion abates greatly from the enjoyments of a mere sensual life. The sensualist owns it in his favourite maxim; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we

we die; let us enjoy the present hour, and banish all anxious thoughts about the future. But must not the libertine then be condemned out of his own mouth, and confuted upon his own principle? * For, at this rate, the beasts are certainly better constituted for this life than he: they are without those incumbrances, which he cannot wholly divest himself of, anxious cares and apprehensions: they live not, like him, in a continued fever between fear and hope, expectation and disappointment. They have no disagreeable retrospects to augment

* As this reasoning may be perhaps thought uncommon, I think myself obliged to support it by the authority of an admired author. "The same faculty of reason and understanding which placeth us above the brute part of the creation, doth also subject our minds to greater and more manifold disquiets than creatures of an inferior rank are sensible of. It is by this that we anticipate future disasters, and oft create to ourselves real pain from imaginary evils, as well as multiply pangs arising from those which cannot be avoided."

Guardian, No. 89.

ment their pains ; no torturing prospects to diminish their pleasures. Numerous sorrows, which they are unacquainted with, break in at the two inlets of reflexion and anticipation, to disturb the present enjoyment. What then is the proper conclusion ? Is reflexion then an enemy to a sensual life ? Yes, the epicure owns it in the best article of his creed ; and, in owning this, owns the destination of man. Human powers, too grand as they are for this present abode, must be designed for a higher state ; and in the mean time, as *the greater according to the natural order of things ever rules the lesser*, the superior understanding must be meant to direct and moderate the lower appetites.

CONSIDER man as a mere creature of this earth, and he is the greatest contradiction in the works of God. All his greater privileges are incumbrances. He is the only creature, who has notions of religion : these notions tend but
to

to torment him. He has reason : this reason is ever at variance and in conflict with his passions. He has a taste for decency and virtue : this taste serves only to make him loath and abhor himself amidst his excesses. He is half-brute and half-angel : he wants to be wholly of this earth ; and yet his faculties and capacities are too grand and refined for its pursuits. —But take the other state into view, and the mystery clears up ; and he becomes a consistent creature. He is truly designed for both worlds ; by the discipline of his passions he is qualified for the enjoyments of both. By confining himself to pleasures, so far as they are innocent, he adds sentiment to passion, refines the animal into the angel, and prepares himself for that spiritual inheritance, for which he is ultimately designed.

V. BUT to proceed : that particular act of reflexion upon moral actions, which we call conscience, which we can neither
controul

controul nor stifle, bears still stronger testimony to this important truth.

No man's mind upbraids him for not being ten foot high, or wanting strength to remove mountains. The reason is, nature formed us to a certain standard of size and strength. Whence comes it, then, that the mind dwells with complacency upon every manly and generous action; and abhors itself upon the recollection of every thing base, mean and immoral? Why does a man abhor himself for base deeds, known only to himself, hid under the deepest veil of darkness, and screened from the eyes of the world beyond the possibility of discovery? Why turns the villain pale at every frightful appearance of nature; and thinks every flash of lightning levelled at himself? Why does a painful consciousness cloud his brow in company, follow him into retirement, plant thorns under his softest pillow, and with dreadful visions disturb his sweetest slumbers?

It

It is the work of God; and his counsels no man can alter. He made us accountable creatures; he gave us a power of obeying him, and he thus warns us, that he intends to call us to account for the abuse of our powers.

LET us pause here a while, and observe the different issues of vice and virtue as far as we can trace them in the present life, and see what judgment we should form upon the observation. How different is christian fortitude from the dismal tragedy of expiring guilt! When evil overtakes the wicked, or the pains of death take hold upon him, what shame, what horror, what self-condemnation is he tortured with! He hopes to be annihilated; yet he dreads the approach of the departing moment. He hopes there is no God, yet he sees him seated above in all his terrors. He wishes to repent; and yet he cannot shed one refreshing tear, or utter one comfortable prayer. He wants to lay
hold

hold of mercy, yet in the next breath he blasphemes, and pronounces himself unworthy of forgiveness. Dreadful secrets weigh down his soul; yet he dares not reveal them, he dares not face them, he dares not recollect them. — Unutterable distress! — What a proof of the vengeance awaiting wickedness in that other state! Why otherwise would the soul labour with all those conflicting thoughts, distort the manly features with that ghostly look, and plunge from its guilty companion, the body, with that indignation and despair?

MARK now, on the contrary, *the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.* Psal. xxxvii. 37. Look at him in the worst state of distress, and see the comforts of a good conscience. The world has frowned upon him, loads his name with dishonour, and his purest intentions with reproach. All this cannot make him think worse of himself; in the consciousness of his inno-

innocence, he hears the storm of calumny without emotion, and silently appeals from men to a more upright tribunal. He labours under a tedious and painful disorder. How could he have so much composure in all his actions, and serenity in his looks, did not God support and animate him with the hopes of a blessed immortality? Blessed God! this is thy work: by this dost thou teach wisdom to the sons of men: let me live in thy fear, and, when I die, *let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!* Num. xxiii. 10.

To die the death of the righteous, we must live his life. And if, in the days of health, we made views of this nature familiar to us, we could not mistake our end and destination. It is under the visitations of God, that nature speaks her genuine language: the flush of health and pampered sense is not the time: that is a feverish state deluding us with the vainest phantoms: the
hour

hour of serious reflexion is the time, when things appear in their true colours and proportions. And happy and wise is he, who draws rules from this serious season to guide and controul him in the gay-er and more tumultuous scenes of life!

VI. I SHALL add but one argument more. That the libertine might not call these things mere arbitrary reasoning and wild conjecture, that he might not have the least room to plead doubts and uncertainties in so important a point, it has pleased GOD to support the witness of nature by the exprefs revelation of his will. When he has declared himself in such awful terms as these; *all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* ii. Cor. v. 10. *All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they*

they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. John v. 28. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. Mat. xxv. 46.

I SAY, when GOD has in this clear and authoritative manner revealed the awful secrets of his future kingdom, what room is there for disbelief or disobedience? what has man to do, but to humble himself before his Maker, to receive his commands with reverence, and to obey them without reserve?

IF, in short, man is not accountable, it must be, because GOD either wants the will or the power to bring him into judgment.

HIS will is clear from the foregoing observations: he has declared his intention; and he is not a man that he should repent. But may he not, you will say, want the power—what? *He, that planteth the ear, shall be not hear? He, that formeth the eye, shall be not see?* He,

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that

that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know? Psal. xciv. 9. He, by whose command, the heavens and earth arose out of nothing, and by whose command they shall vanish again, shall he want power to chastise those creatures, who have trampled upon his laws, and set his authority at defiance? In vain shall they hope to sleep in the dust for ever: the power, that first formed them, shall awaken them to their doom. In vain shall they cry to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on them and screen them from his wrath: those rocks and mountains arose at his command, and by his command are vanishing with the whole machine of nature. There is no subterfuge; no alternative: EVERY ONE SHALL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD. Resistance is vain; for the Judge is omnipotent: all artifices are vain; for he is omniscient and knoweth all things: all prayers are vain; for he is now no longer a Saviour, but a Judge.

The

The holy angels (says the scripture) shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; but the righteous shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Mat. xiii. 41, &c.

VII. THE conclusion is short: since this life, then, is only *introductory* to another, let us form a consistent plan. We generally provide in youth for the wants of age: to neglect this is generally thought imprudent, because of the connexion between these two stages of life. Alas! this connexion is not inseparable: the young may not live to be old; the gay libertine tells you he intends not to be old. But young and old alike must die and go into the other state. The connexion between these two states is inseparable. As sure as we now live, we must be judged. Let us then in this time provide for the wants of eternity. Innocence of manners generally

is as happy here as it desires ; it will infallibly make us happy hereafter. If it leads into trials and distresses—they can be but temporary ; the happiness of futurity will make us an abundant compensation. And as we are exposed to numerous temptations in our passage, let us ever remember that we are accountable creatures ; and that will be our security.

“ HE, that will be my judge, is always about my path and about my bed, and spieth out all my ways ; and how can I commit this sin in his awful presence ? Or, if I have fallen in the weakness of my nature, I will repent.—He who is to be my judge, is in this life my Saviour, accepteth of my repentance, and blotteth out all my transgressions.”

28 SE60

SER-

S E R M O N II.

Of the future Resurrection.



S E R M O N II.

JOB xix. 25, 26, 27.-

I KNOW, THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH,
AND THAT HE SHALL STAND AT THE
LATTER DAY UPON THE EARTH: AND
THOUGH AFTER MY SKIN WORMS
DESTROY THIS BODY, YET IN MY
FLESH SHALL I SEE GOD: WHOM I
SHALL SEE FOR MYSELF AND MINE
EYES SHALL BEHOLD AND NOT ANO-
THER.

THAT the dead of all generations,
from the beginning to the end of
the world, should again be organized out
of the confused mass of matter, into
which they are resolved, and that this
immense innumerable multitude should
appear together in one assembly, to un-

dergo a strict and impartial review of their former actions; is a conception, not to be formed without amazement. But such are the discoveries of revelation. Every one must again *in his flesh*, as the text expresses it, *see God*. When the purposes of this perishable world are at an end, when matter has served the various transmutations necessary to the continuance of this earth for its allotted period; then the same Divine Power, which originally created matter, and out of it fitted to every soul such a body as was necessary for its present existence, will raise up spiritual bodies to prepare us for a perfecter state.

THOSE men, who deny such a restoration, (to use the words of awful authority) *neither know the scriptures, nor the power of God*. Mat. xxii. 29.

IT was the belief of patriarchs and good men in every age: *they confessed themselves* (as St. Paul assures us,) *to be pilgrims and strangers in the earth, and sought a better country*. Heb. xi. 13.

Nor

Nor was this belief confined to the Mo-
saic revelation: it was the religion of
the Gentiles, till corruption banished
their better notions. Even Job,* the
Idumæan, we see here, professes this be-
lief, and supports his heavy afflictions
under its comfortable influence.

I. AND *why should it be thought a thing
incredible with you, that God should raise
the dead?* An artist, it is easy to con-
ceive, can sooner restore a disjointed
machine, especially if it be of his own
construction, than originally design and
finish it. The power, which forms
man, must, by parity of reasoning, be
equally able to restore his mouldered
frame. Nay, it requires a greater ex-
ertion of Divine Power—(though indeed
to omnipotence all things are equally
easy—but to our apprehensions it should
seem

* THAT the text means not the venerable sufferer's re-
storation to his former prosperity (as some have weakly
imagined) but a real and proper resurrection, is solidly
proved by Bishop Sherlock. Disc. on Proph. Dissert. 2.

seem a more difficult work for the Almighty)—to mould the human body into its present admirable texture and composition, than to recall it from its state of dispersion, in the appointed season of his Providence.

BUT this comparison, it may be imagined, is not exact: the perished body resembles not a machine, merely disjointed and taken to pieces. Its parts lose their tone, and alter their whole form and texture. It rather resembles such works of art, as, by a total decay of perishing materials, become in time incapable of restoration. But this is a vulgar prejudice. Not a single particle of matter can perish.* The mass may be continually altering and varying its forms, to answer the purposes of nature, but

* LUCRETIVS *with his usual exuberance of fancy, beautifully illustrates this observation, and concludes,*

HAUD igitur penitus pereunt quæcunque videntur:
Quando aliud ex alio reficit natura, nec ullam
Rem gigni patitur, nisi morte adjutam aliena.

Lib. i. 263.

but not a single atom can be lost out of the world, but by the power of God, who is the sovereign disposer of the whole, in all states and changes.

To be sure, the parts of dead bodies are sometimes dispersed far and wide through the creation, mingled with all the elements, and blended and incorporated with other bodies. But this cannot frustrate or obstruct the purposes of a Divine Agent, whose knowledge pervades all nature, and whose power knoweth no resistance. Every thing lies naked and open in his sight, and is perfectly subservient to his command. His eye attends, and his hand disposes, every particle of matter in all its revolutions and stages of transmutation. And it is easy to conceive, that such a Being will rather prevent all such changes in the course of things, as tend to defeat his purpose, than finally suffer his promise to fall to the ground.

THE doctrine of the resurrection, I
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am sure, is not as amazing, as the unbelief of a rational creature, having an opportunity, every day of his life, of observing so many similar instances of Divine Power, in the common appearances of the material world.

WHEN you look at a caterpillar, upon the first view you can hardly think, that such a crawling insect, loathsome, and hideous to the sight, should, in a certain time, become a new creature of distinguished rank and order.* Attend him a little longer, and your disbelief increases.

He

* FOR the information of some readers, it is necessary to observe, that many genera of flies pass through three states, the first of the worm or maggot, the second of the nymph or aurelia, and the third of the fly or papilio. In the nymphal state the animal makes a shell of its own skin, which hardens and becomes brown or reddish, while the whole of its body becomes detached from it; and, after having lain some time in form of an oblong ball, apparently without sense or life, and without any visible parts of the future creature, acquires by degrees the form of a fly and all its limbs, *Supplem. to Chambers. Article NYMPH*. And what is still more curious, the real fly, or higher nature, was secretly contained all the while in the two subordinate stages. See *Article FIVE*.

He seemingly loses all sense and motion: he falls into a torpid state—And yet, behold, a few days past, he really rises a beautiful winged creature, magnificently arrayed in colours, beyond the tints of art: the study and admiration of the curious.

Look at the face of things in the cold inanimate state of winter. It is all one vast waste: all things lie blended in confusion: fruits and flowers no longer preserve their distinctions: what the industry of man sows, seems lost and overwhelmed in the general wreck: such vegetables, as require not human culture, have given their seeds to be the sport of winds, and they seem totally lost amidst the ruins of nature—But, behold again, the Almighty Ruler sends forth the genial breezes of the spring: nature starts, as it were, from sleep: earth resumes its verdure: and fruits and flowers spring up in all the richness of colours peculiar to their respective species.

WE,

WE, poor short-sighted creatures, see nothing wonderful in this change. It is a sight quite familiar to us : the seasons revolve in regular succession : and we are taught by experience to wait for their stated returns. And yet, in fact, there is nothing more in the future renovation of man. This spiritual revolution, though slower, yet is as certain, as the revolutions of the natural world. At present we fall into the dust ; and there we lie in one promiscuous mass, blended and undistinguished—But when the arch-angel of him, who hath ordained the vicissitude of seasons, gives the signal for the revival of man ; then, where is the wonder, that mankind shall also start up in their proper forms, and persons, to answer the purposes of his moral Providence ?

HERE is no difficulty, but what we create to ourselves. We cannot conceive, that there can be a proper resurrection, unless the same exact quantity of matter, which

which was laid in the grave, be restored. But this is a weak supposition. The sameness of man lies not in having the same numerical parts : our bodies, while we live, are in a continual flux : there may be such a flux, or loss of parts in a dissolved state : and yet the rising bodies still be the same. The sameness of man lies in the consciousness of being the same person, of having the same thoughts, inclinations, and habits, under a similar mode of union between the two constituent parts, the soul and body.* Whether the matter, *actually* belonging to a person in some part of his life, be necessary to complete the future man ; or (what is more probable) whether *any* matter,

* For the first opinion, consult *Whitby's* preface to 1. Cor. *Clarke's* Def. of Nat. and Rev. Relig. Fol. Vol. 2. p. 690. For the second, consult *Locke's* Essay. B. 2. C. 27. *Dr. Watts* endeavours to reconcile the difference between both opinions. Essay 8. Bp. *Sherlock* seems to be for the latter. "Religion," says he, "is concerned only, to preserve identity or sameness of the person, as the object of future judgment. *Sherlock*, Vol. 3. Ser. 17.

matter, joined to the soul, under a particular organization, be sufficient to answer the purposes of God; this is certain, he has power to accomplish his designs, and the wonderful changes we see in the course of his ordinary Providences leave scepticism totally without excuse.

II. THE purposes of this event are equal to its grandeur and solemnity. The glory of God, and the salvation of man are concerned in it.

IT would lead us into too wide a field, to take a particular view of the various disorders which the Divine Goodness is engaged to rectify in a future dispensation. It is sufficient at present to appeal to every man's experience. Who sees not, or at least hears not, every day, of numbers suffering under natural evil in some form or other? What day passes unpolluted by outrages, either from the tongue of the slanderer, the lust of the libertine, the hand of the oppressor, or the

the fraud of the deceiver? How many innocent persons suffer sometimes by the corruption of justice, sometimes even undesignedly by the blindness of human judgment, and the darkness of intricate suspicious circumstances? And who does not, upon such a sight, naturally appeal to some more equitable tribunal, where innocence shall be cleared, obedience rewarded, and guilt covered with its deserved infamy, reproach and punishment?

WERE we to examine closely into the several states and conditions of mankind, and collect all they suffer, from poverty, sickness, labour, anxiety, disappointment; were we to look back into history, and bring into one common view the vast multitudes that have combated with adversity in the different ages of the world; did we imagine the still greater number, that have suffered unnoticed and fallen undistinguished—it would

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draw tears from our eyes, and make us almost doubt of a gracious Providence.

BUT there are reasons for the present inequality of things. There is order enough in the world to convince us that it is not ungoverned, or left to the blind issue of accidents, and the caprice of human passions; and there is disorder enough to satisfy us that God intends us for a more equitable scene, where the majesty of his laws shall be supported, and the wisdom of virtue approved in the sight of the whole creation.

THE world is at present in a fallen state. The Almighty is, through the mediation of his blessed Son, raising it by degrees, by a gradual process, consistent with our freedom, to its original purity, and happiness. The scene then is disordered at present: the purposes of Providence are not fulfilled: the number of the elect is not complete. When this time comes, then this corrupt system shall be done away; the Redeem-

Redeemer, who opened salvation to the whole human race, shall come in glory, to wind up the scene, and to award salvation to the good of all ages, whom he purchased by his blood and sanctified by his spirit. This is a purpose becoming the majesty of God; to bring the perplexed drama of human life to a complete issue, to clear up the mysteries of sin and misery, that puzzled and distressed us so much before, and to allot a happiness equal to our highest wishes and capacities—to take an universal cognizance of all his creatures; of princes and rulers, (the great perverters of justice here below) as well as the poor—with an authority, that shall destroy all the corrupt sources of present injustice, for power shall no longer over-rule, or riches corrupt, or artifice elude, or hypocrisy deceive—and that too, in a manner so public and visible, as to support the majesty of his

laws in the sight of the whole creation.

WE consider things in too narrow and confined a view, if we imagine, that the inhabitants of this earth alone are interested in this important issue. All creatures, however exalted their spheres and capacities, are independent, standing only by a voluntary obedience. And who can say, but that there are innumerable inhabitants of other worlds, who have their eyes fixed upon the transactions of this, whose happiness and obedience may depend upon a righteous discrimination between those, who obey and disobey the divine will here on earth? The angels are certainly mentioned in scripture as *spectators* of this most important solemnity — it is to be in the sight of angels as well as men — Had the scene no reference to them, by way of moral motive or example, it is hard to assign any reason, why they should be witnesses of the transaction.

As an universal judgment is thus necessary



cessary to support the authority of the divine laws, so it is necessary that man should then appear in his full capacity as consisting of body as well as soul.

WE see an obvious and necessary connexion between these two parts in our present state.* Unbelievers have carried it so far, as to infer the mortality of the soul from this single circumstance.

BUT it is demonstrable that matter is incapable of thought and voluntary motion, and that there must be an immaterial principle within us, to actuate this bodily machine. At the same time as God forms created spirits more or less limited in their powers according to his own good pleasure, so it is plain, from what we see, that he has formed the human spirit so far dependent, that a

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mate-

*Præterea, gigni pariter cum corpore, et unâ

Crescere sentimus, pariterq; senescere mentem.

Lucr. L. 3. 446.

material instrument is necessary to its operations and enjoyments. Its sensations, we see, are languid or vigorous, according to the tone of the bodily frame: they grow, decay, and fluctuate, according to its temperament in the different stages of life. And from this appearance we may justly infer, that its reunion with the body is necessary to make it capable of exerting its full powers and capacities; and, consequently, if virtue is to be rewarded, and vice punished at all, there must be a restoration of the whole man, that he may receive his proper allotment.

IN this state indeed, the body, through the corruption of the fall, is at once the soul's assistant and incumbrance. Its parts are at present mouldering, gross, and corruptible. But the same Being, that originally made both parts necessary to one another, will prepare hereafter a better body,
suitable

suitable to the grandeur of his designs in favour of man.

FOR when the souls of the pious are cleansed, by the blood of Christ, from all those smaller stains, which adhere to the best in this state of frailty, the body, to heighten their enjoyments, will be raised to a suitable degree of purity and perfection. *This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. i. Cor. xv. 53. Then shall they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat: for the lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Rev. vii. 16.*

WHAT a spiritual body is, we cannot indeed conceive; but the power of God is able to execute whatever his goodness contrives for the happiness of his creatures.

HE has given us wondrous proofs of this attribute in the active swiftness of light and the lustre of colours, and in several other parts of this material world.

HE can do as much more as he pleases, in the future resurrection. He has promised a change, great and glorious, beyond our comprehension. Christ has died to bring about this amazing issue from the present ruined state of this corrupt system.

LET us now lay these things together; and we shall (as far as we have a right to look into the ways of God) see the reasons and propriety of a future resurrection.

MAN, originally created upright and immortal, having fallen from his perfect state, the Son of God undertook the office of restoring him to his former, or rather indeed to a greater degree of happiness. The body, which in the present state is mortal, is a necessary
part

part of man, and will be raised in the highest purity to complete his happiness. How much nobler is this, than to believe, with the joyless patrons of naturalism, that this world is just as God first made it, and that we are doomed to live and die like the beasts that perish! Who so proper to judge the world, as he who redeemed it? What time so proper, as when he has completed the amazing scheme of salvation? And what a powerful motive to virtue, that he, whose laws we see broken here, will be our judge, that he bore our nature, and will allow for our infirmities?

III. UNDER the influence, then, of these discoveries, let us learn to make it our great end to secure an inheritance in that happier state; that, when the fashion of this world is passed away, and *our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we may have a building of God, a*
house

house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

ARE things around us in disorder? are the honours and pleasures of the world sometimes the reward of iniquity? Let not this tempt us to swerve from our integrity, and let us wait with patience for our reward. All things will be set hereafter upon their proper foundations; it is but waiting a short time; and the tares shall be finally separated from the good fruit and committed to the fire.

WE can sin often here with the certain prospect of impunity. Let this not seduce us. He, who is then to be our judge, is now the spectator of our actions. Then the secrets of all hearts shall be discovered, the works of darkness exposed, and even what we have done in the inner chambers be published before the general assembly of men and angels.

WE murmur at the different degrees
of

of honour and dishonour, which affect our bodies here.* Alas! we appear now, but as it were upon a stage, for temporary purposes. A few hours over, the fictitious scene vanishes; the actor, who represented the monarch, and he, who just before trembled at his frown in a vassal's disguise, shall stand upon the same level, and be valued, in their *real* life, just as virtue forms the distinction. All the blessings of the spiritual world will be peculiarly appropriated to the good alone. If we are happy, therefore, in the good things of this world, let us learn humility; if unhappy, we may easily learn resignation and content under any infirmities.

EVEN death itself, the greatest of human evils, is thus disarmed of all its terrors, and becomes to the pious christian, what the bed is to the weary traveller

* THIS thought is beautifully enlarged upon, in Lucian. Ed. Bleau. Tom. 1. p. 335.

veller; a place of repose; repose from the cares and toils and evils of mortality: a place of truer repose; for the one lies down only, to rise the next morning with recruited strength and spirits to renew the same tedious circle of earthly toil; but the other lies down with a certainty of waking again into a life of perfect, unmixed, and unceasing happiness.

COULD we in short keep these things constantly before our eyes in their full vigour, we should rise, I had almost said, into a sinless independence, above the world and all its numerous temptations.

BUT let us do, what infirmity really permits us; let us make them as familiar, as we can, by frequent acts of faith and meditation, and we cannot greatly fall.

28 SE60

SER-

S E R M O N III.

Of future Rewards.



S E R M O N III.

i. COR. ii. 9. ✓

EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR
HEARD, NEITHER HAVE ENTERED
INTO THE HEART OF MAN, THE
THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PRE-
PARED FOR THEM THAT LOVE
HIM.

THE mind of man generally forms
itself according to the objects,
with which it converses.* It contracts a
narrow

* Εστι δε ουδεπότ', οίμαι, δυνατόν μικρά και φάυλα πρατ-
τοντας μέγα και νεανικόν φρόνημα λαβεῖν, ὡς περ & δε καλά
και λαμπρά πραττοντίας μικρόν και ταπεινόν φρονεῖν. Οποῖ-
αῖτα γάρ αν τα επιτηδεύματα των ανδρων η, τοιστον αναγκη
και το φρόνημα εχειν. Demosth. Wolfii, Ed. p. 127.

narrow grovelling taste amidst fordid engagements; and dilates, as it were, and assumes a certain grandeur of sentiment amidst elevated views and generous pursuits.

THIS remark is to be applied with most propriety to the business of life and the prospects of futurity. The greatest views, which the mind is capable of, are presented by religion. The world offers nothing worthy of its ambition. Where it pleases, it but pleases for a time, and leaves shame and sorrow and dissatisfaction behind. Where it pleases, it generally enslaves and degrades. A man, attached to passion, and immersed in matter, can do nothing great or generous. He is foiled by every temptation, and sinks dispirited under every calamity.

LET the eye see, and the ear hear, and, what is more, let sportive fancy imagine and combine whatever pleasures this earth affords; still the capacities of man
cannot

cannot be enlarged, the inlets of enjoyment cannot be increased. The whole amount, at last, will only be—an insipid circulation of the meanest offices. To eat, drink, and play;—and—when nature sinks under the fatigue—to sleep;—and then, to rise recruited—to no end—but, to begin the same circle again; to eat, drink and play—forgetful of God, and useless to the world—this forms the plan of a sensual life.

THE sensualist, however, is happy enough with it; he would be contented, he tells us, to spend an eternity in such enjoyments. But alas! God forbids: disease comes on, infirmity hastens its pace, senses decay, nature sinks, and death closes up the worthless scene.

Is this an object, worthy of man? Were we born for no higher purpose? Yes, we were; for the service of God. *And eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of*

D

man,

*man, the things which he hath prepared for them that love him.**

WE shall enter sufficiently into the views of the text, if we consider,

I. THE inconveniences of the present state.

II. THE greatness of our future reward, and

III. THE certainty of it.

I. IF in this life only we have hope, miserable is a great part of our fellow-creatures, wretched their portion and inheritance! The history of mankind is nothing but a history of human misery. It is but a detail of what man has suffered by plagues, pestilences, famines,

* THESE words properly relate to the general discoveries of the divine will made to us in the gospel, the apostle having himself so limited them, v. 10; *but God hath revealed them to us by his spirit*, whereas our future happiness is not yet revealed. i. John iii. 2. Yet they may be very properly accommodated to the blessings of the other world, as forming a principal part of the christian revelation.

famines, and the outrages of the worst enemy of man, man himself.* The most splendid parts of it, the rise and fall of empires, the wars and triumphs of heroes deserve no better name. There is a glare thrown over these things, which deceives us: we admire the hero, we are embarked in his designs, actuated by his passions, and interested in his success. But did we give ourselves the coolness to consider these transactions on the good-natured side of humanity; did we examine the cruel circumstances and lamentable consequences of them, and imagine to ourselves the thousands that suffer in these contentions, the slaughtered multitudes,

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the

* *Est Dicaearchi liber de interitu hominum, says Cicero, qui, collectis cæteris causis, eluvionis, pestilentia, vastitatis, beluarum etiam repentinae multitudinis, quarum impetu docet quædam hominum genera esse consumpta; deinde comparat, quanto plures deleti sint homines hominum impetu, quam omni reliquâ calamitate.* Off. 2. 5. See Wollaston, 9. 8.

the sacked cities, and desolated provinces; we should, instead of admiring them, rather weep over them as monuments of human madness, and human misery. But this makes the least part of the account. Multitudes have suffered, without the least rational motive, in the wantonness of tyrannic cruelty—dragged into captivity—condemned to toil like beasts, under the lash—plunged into mines or dungeons—and put to death in the most excruciating torments.

If we live remote from public dangers, situated in peace and ease at home, yet there we are exposed to miseries. The evils of sickness overtake us: we are exposed to a thousand racking disorders almost insufferable to human nature: the remedies are almost as dreadful as the disorder. The least accident brings them on: they come on suddenly in the gayest season of enjoyment: they continue for our lives, and allow but the poor hope of a few short intervals

vals of ease, till death comes to our relief.*—We have relations and friends, dear to us as ourselves: We must share too in their afflictions: their sufferings give us pain; their death often leaves us solitary and helpless, without comfort or even support.

THERE are many of the poor, who, for want of employment, through ill health, or unfavourable accidents, cannot raise themselves above want, and depend for their nourishment upon the poor precarious charity of a selfish world: the more industrious and happy part get their bread by incessant labour, by the sweat of their brow, and the marrow of their strength. Custom indeed renders their labour familiar and agreeable to them: but a life of constant drudgery, admitting of no ease or

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respite,

* SEE a beautiful description of human maladies, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. B. II. 477.

respice, cannot surely be the ultimate happiness of rational creatures.

AND if we look at the rich (where we might naturally expect more happiness;) we have not a much better prospect. They are exposed to the common casualties of mortality: and when a slight accident affects their body or disturbs their mind, they lose the taste and relish of all their comforts. Their very pleasures tire them by their repetition; and, had they not the poor comfort of varying them by the inventive wantonness of luxury, they would loathe their lives as a burden, and their riches as an incumbrance.

LIFE, in general, vary it as we will, is but a mean thing: if we labour, weariness and fatigue ensues; if we follow diversions, these are but an artificial sort of labour; and if we rest, disease punishes our indolence.

BUT let us view those three great pursuits, in which the dignity of nature really

really consists, public service, knowledge, and virtue; and what weariness do we not encounter here, to obstruct our labours, and embitter our satisfactions! Though there is nothing more pleasant to the mind than knowledge, yet, truth is so involved and encumbered with difficulties, that in most things we cannot rise beyond the doubts of probable conjecture. We pass through a tedious, and painful process of investigation: frequently we are disappointed of our conclusion; and, where we are not disappointed, we forget the chain; the conclusion vanishes with the evidence, and doubt, uncertainty and ignorance again return. The strength of our mind is affected by the fluctuating temper of our bodies. Accordingly under the attacks of disease or old-age, the memory loses its tone, ideas fade, knowledge decays, and we sink again into the idiotism of infant ignorance.

If we take the track of public life, ge-

nerous and noble as it is to do good, (the most laudable of pursuits and exquisite of pleasures!) we meet here with vexations to embitter our satisfactions. How often are we traduced in our best-meant actions, misinterpreted in our best motives, and opposed in our best designs? Be our sphere ever so large, we can benefit but a few: in that few how often do we find ingratitude; and in others, whom we cannot benefit, reproach, envy, and opposition?

OR if, lastly, we place our happiness in virtue and the service of God (delightful as the exercise is, comfortable as a sense of the Divine approbation must be to a dependent creature!) yet how often do clouds arise to interrupt the comforts and serenity of conscience? Doubts often obscure our clearest views, passions disorder our tempers, temptations assail our virtue, and wanderings clog our devotions, and deaden our aspirations.

SUCH

SUCH evils, then, such inconveniences do we encounter with, in the various conditions of life. In many of them they are so wearisome and insupportable, that, were it not for the instinct of preservation, so closely interwoven with our frame, and the strong bar, which the Almighty has fixed against self-destruction, such numbers would not groan and sweat under a weary life, amidst the many ready methods of procuring themselves repose. But God has forbidden this, as the highest of offences; has commanded patience as our duty, and provided heaven for our reward. — This brings me to the second proposition, the greatness of our future reward.

II. As we know nothing of spiritual things but by comparisons drawn from sensible objects, *as we see but as it were through a glass darkly* in our present imperfect state; it is impossible to have
any

any positive knowledge, in what the happiness of heaven consists: but we know and see enough to make us pursue it as our ultimate and highest happiness. It breaks in upon us in the discoveries of the gospel with superior light: earthly things disappear before it: they lose their importance and lustre. Glittering as they appeared to the darkened eye of sense, yet, before the glories of eternity, like the stars before the sun, they fade and *hide their diminished heads*. And if we made these views familiar to us by frequent reflexion (for, without this, faith is but a dead principle;) the meanest christian might acquire a greatness of mind superior to all the allurements and terrors of the world.

THE spirit of God, as I mentioned before, being not able, without altering our natures, to render our future

ture reward intelligible to us but by comparisons taken from what we know and experience here, has given us to understand — and this is sufficient for every moral purpose — that we shall at least be freed from all present inconveniences. Such miseries, as our minds and bodies have felt here, shall molest no more: corruption and misery shall be carried no farther than the grave: we shall arise new creatures from thence, into perfect and unchangeable happiness. The righteous then *shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. The lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; he shall make them drink of the river of his pleasures.*

pleasures. Rev. vii. 16, 17. xxi. 4.
Psa. xxxvi. 8.

DOES the shipwrecked mariner look back with triumph upon the devouring sea, from which he has just escaped, where he suffered so much, and dreaded more? And what must it be to the righteous to look back upon the follies, miseries and dangers, from which he has escaped into so much happiness! Let the waves of affliction rage and swell; they cannot pass their bounds; they belong only to this tempestuous world: his happiness is seated far beyond their reach. *The weary rest from their labours, the prisoner no longer hears the voice of his oppressor.*

Now let us endeavour to form some idea, inadequate as it must be, of the happiness of souls and bodies united in a state of perfection.

THERE is a delight in knowledge: the desire of it is natural to the mind: it is painful to be tossed with doubts, perplexities

plexities and errors. We feel a most exquisite glow of pleasure spread over us upon the discovery of truth; we feel a permanent sensation of pleasure in a steady contemplation upon some truth. This satisfaction, in the few branches of knowledge which admit of it, we think a sufficient reward for a tedious laborious investigation; for this, we compass sea and land, in observing the different faces of countries, and customs of people, for this we spend days and nights and years in discovering and classing the various curiosities of art and nature, in contemplating the heavenly bodies, calculating their motions, and speculating upon their uses. Mean pursuits upon comparison! To beatified saints, it is probable, all these things will be easy. Their curiosity may be boundless, and their powers equal to their curiosity; they may travel on the wings of the morning, with the swiftness of light or even of thought, in visiting the numerous

rous mansions of glory in the kingdom of God; the secrets of his Providence may be unfolded, and the riches of his creation displayed. This is certain, *we shall know even as we are known.*

THERE is a pleasure in the ardors of true friendship, and the pure unsuspicious exchange of benevolent affections. We shall then be all benevolence. All rude passions will be left behind. We shall then come into the happiest of societies; *unto mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.* Heb. xii. 22. The grossest soul among us must conceive in some degree the pleasure of this exchange — to remove from the conversation of a peevish selfish world, to such admirable society; from the perfidy, slander, and envy of sinful dust and ashes, to the wise, innocent and endearing conversation of angelical

angelical beings; to live in friendships unruffled by distrusts, undissolved by death, free from all evils, and burning with unabated ardors.

THERE is lastly a pleasure in virtuous dispositions, in pious exercises and aspirations. What must it be, when, divested of the incumbrances of flesh and blood, we shall be all flame, all love, and all devotion? As the ignorant have faint ideas of the pleasures of knowledge, so the vicious and debauched can have but a mean opinion of virtuous pleasures. But their opinion alters not the nature of things. He, who formed so many things capable of giving us delight here, must be much more amiable in his own nature, and perfections and greater works. To view him with an unclouded understanding, to love him with permanent unabating affections, must be a delight passing all understanding.

IN short, we must be as happy, as
he,

he, who made all the pleasures of this world can make us, in a world, where evils are to have no place; as happy as Almighty power, and infinite goodness can make us; as happy, as he can make us, *in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

III. AND this leads us to the last point to be considered; the certainty of our future reward.

To pass by the natural prefages and hopes of future happiness, which no man throws away, till he forfeits, (as he fears,) his title to it by disobedience; I will use but one argument, addressed to the wicked themselves, drawn from their feelings and experience. Though it never enters into their thoughts in the giddy riot of enjoyment, yet they must allow that God made the world. You find, then, a pleasure in the exquisite feelings, which God has diffused
over

over the several parts, by which you taste the pleasures of this world. Do you think, that God has exhausted his power; that he, who contrived these things, who formed the texture of your senses in such an admirable manner for the relish of sensible objects, cannot to purer bodies adapt purer pleasures, to souls and bodies perfectly attuned and harmonized higher and more exquisite enjoyments?

Go then, and gaze with rapture on your encreasing stores, break through all the ties of honour and conscience, to gratify your desires—but know, that you are doating on things that were formed by him, who has forbidden your avarice and injustice, who has promised to virtue durable and lasting riches in a better world. Go and gaze on titles and honours and power, betray your friends, oppress the innocent, prostitute your conscience, to enrich and aggrandize yourself and procure the gaping admira-

E

tion

tion of a silly world — but know, that these powers and honours were appointed by God, who has provided higher honours for true virtue, an inheritance undefiled, a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Go and pursue pleasures, ransack every element, explore all the luxury of tastes, squander all your wealth on your appetites, and consider your reason as designed to cater for your meaner lusts—But know, that God made those senses, and those good things which you so wantonly abuse, and has provided for virtue pleasures more pure, more refined, and durable.

“ BUT you deny not his power, but
“ possibly, you say, he has no such de-
“ signs: the promises, which are pre-
“ tended, may be illusion and imposture.
“ This life we know, the other we
“ know not; it is folly to quit certain-
“ ties for uncertainties.”

IF his power, then, be undisputed, a few words will be sufficient. As for the
truth

truth of his promises, I leave you to dispute that point with him at his tribunal. You take the promise of a man like yourself, though he may want sincerity, though he may change his will by instability of humour, though, were he ever so sincere and fixt, a thousand accidents may deprive him of the power of performing his promise. It is the office of faith (and surely it is no grievous imposition!) to believe the promise of a God, who is ever true, immutable, and omnipotent; the author of nature; and the director of all events.*

“ BUT if he made the pleasures of
 “ the world, where is the harm of en-
 “ joying them; why would he give us
 E 2 “ appe-

* HOMER had truer notions than many nominal christians: he understood these three perfections of the Divine Being:

— ε γαρ εμον παλιναγρετον, εδ' απατηλον,
 Ουδ' ατελευτητον, γ', ο, τι κεν κεφαλη κατανευσω.

Il. 1. 526.

“appetites, if he meant to debar us of
“the enjoyment?”

THE answer is short and easy: We are so far from being debarred the enjoyment of our appetites, that our duty lies in enjoying them, provided we do it in a virtuous manner; and it happens very unluckily for the debauchee, that the virtuous indulgence is the truer happiness. Where they cannot be indulged but at the expence of innocence, there they are to be denied: for God has forbidden the pleasure. Religion calls us not into cloystered retirement: We then best obey it, when we discharge the several duties of active life, provided we discharge them with innocence. Religion only interferes, where justice, honour, and charity are to be violated: there we must obey God rather than men.

As for the good and virtuous, who are obliged to suffer by such abstinence, or by the calamities of the world, let them consider, that their sufferings give
them

them a kind of right or title to the promise of God. He has promised to avenge their wrongs and reward their patience. He cannot forsake you without denying his own nature. Whatever be your trials and distresses, submit to them; and, though the world offered you all its transitory glories to seduce you, yet let it not tempt you to forfeit your greater privileges.

28 SE 60

S E R M O N I V .

Of future Punishments.



S E R M O N IV.

MAT. XXV. 46.

THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVER-
LASTING PUNISHMENT.✓

WHAT a terrible prospect is here !
the gracious author of nature in
wrath, and dooming a number of his
own creatures to everlasting misery ! to
consuming flames, where they shall
rest neither day nor night ! where they
shall curse the hour of their birth, and
want one ray of hope, *which comes to*
all, to enlighten the horrors of despair !
Gracious God, certainly, thou didst
never

never form any of thy creatures to make them miserable; thou intendest not to deal so severely with the works of thy hands!

THUS are we apt to harden ourselves against the terrors of the Almighty, and to defeat the purposes of his laws. But let us not deceive ourselves: GOD is not mocked: It is not probable that he meant to frighten us with any illusive terrors, nor is it prudent to risk our safety upon our own fond and arbitrary presumptions. By his will must we stand or fall: to that let us apply for instruction.

IT has been observed by some men, with much complacency, that the original word in scripture, denoting the *continuance* of future punishment, is sometimes applied to subjects of temporary duration. In this sense, for instance, we read of *everlasting bills*; and the laws of Moses are called *everlasting ordinances*.

BUT

BUT this observation has not the least weight. The word,* in its primary meaning, signifies a *real* and *proper eternity*; and it is an universal rule in all languages, that words must be taken in their original acceptation, unless there be some concomitant circumstance, expressed or implied, to give them a figurative sense. Would it not be absurd to say, that, because in the figurative vehemence of passion, we talk of eternal love and eternal hatred to one another in familiar life, therefore the word is used in our language, upon no other occasion, in its native extended signification? Every one sees that such phrases are but strong and glowing expressions of firm and lasting affections: the commonest person sees the figure: the nature of the thing determines the sense. In the same manner, though the scripture does sometimes apply the word
everlast-

* αἰώνιος eternal from αἰεῖ forever.

everlasting to things of limited duration, to mountains upon account of their firmness, and to the Mosaic ordinances on account of their obligation during the allotted period of the Jewish polity; yet can this be any argument, that the word must mean a limited period, even where there is nothing, either expressed or implied, in the connexion or nature of the thing, to restrain and limit its signification? certainly not: it is not the method of understanding language; and as GOD has vouchsafed to speak to us in the language of men, his word must be subject to the common laws of interpreting human language.

THE same word is used in scripture to express the duration both of future punishments and rewards: *these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.** As no one doubts,

* THE original word is *αιωνιος*, though the English translators have chosen to vary the expression, and by

doubts, whether the blifs, here promised to patient virtue, be not properly everlasting, fo every one is led to infer, that the punishment, here threatened to disobedience, is of equal duration. Nay, when the scripture expreffes the infinite duration of God, who is the fountain of all being, and can consequently have no end; the same word is used to exprefs this amazing attribute. *The eternal, immortal, invifible and only wife God.* i. Tim. i. 17. And, unlefs there be something in the nature of creatures incapable of fuch a proper eternity (which we know nothing of) we have more reason from scripture to apprehend, that future punishments continue as long as God exists, than to fuppofe them temporary, fhort, and tranfient.

BUT

by that means loft in fome measure the folemnity of the antithesis. “ These fhall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.

BUT a sanction, so awful and important, rests not upon loose conclusions. It has pleased God to enforce it in a manner, that admits not of misapprehension; in positive terms, exclusive of every possible idea of finiteness or cessation. *They shall be cast, says the scripture, into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth: they shall have no rest day nor night, and the smoke shall ascend up forever: their worm shall never die, and the fire shall be never quenched.* No law was ever more explicit, no penalty more clearly pointed out to universal notice. Here is no room to plead ignorance; here is no room for mistake or evasion.

BUT, you will say, reason revolts, humanity trembles, compassion shudders at the supposition, Can he, who made us capable of tendering at the thoughts of such sufferings, want compassion himself? Can he exact, what he makes us commiserate as a severe infliction?

Can

Can the Lord forget to be gracious, and shut up his loving kindness in displeasure?

IN answer to this I would observe, that if we must reason from our own sentiments and apprehensions about the ways of God—which we certainly have no right to do in matters of express will, as he may have a thousand reasons for what he does beyond our ideas or comprehension—but if we must reason about his ways from our own imperfect views; let us act at least as becomes men, and argue rather from the principles of sound reason, than the erring impulse of blind instincts. Let us only consider him as a MORAL GOVERNOR, presiding over such free actions, as are the subject of human government; and then, if we *must* judge of his ways—I almost tremble to mention it—we must judge of him from what we ought to do as *magistrates*, then what we feel, as *partial individuals*.

COM-

COMPASSION and justice, we very well know, are often at variance in human measures. Do we not often pity criminals under punishments, which our better reason at the same time approves? Do we not approve of penal laws, though we melt at the rigor of their execution? Nay, does not the judge himself frequently commiserate, while the exigences of society oblige him to condemn?

THE Divine Benevolence can by no means be considered as a blind principle, distributing happiness promiscuously without regard to the qualifications of the creature; but as a rational principle, under the direction of other perfections, wisdom, justice, and order.

HUMAN creatures make but a small part of the divine kingdom. They are the lowest in the scale of intellectual creation. There are various classes rising in noble progression between them

them and Divine Perfection. All these stand by a voluntary obedience.

THERE are certain laws, by which they are all governed; by which they are all improving in their natures and encreasing in their enjoyments.

MAN, the lowest of these, by his body allied to the animals around him, and by his soul allied to superior intelligencies, has the noble prospect before him of rising, by the culture of his moral capacities, into these nobler societies according to the degrees of his improvement. Some men, fired with a noble ardor despise this world and its pollutions; others are caught by its snares, whom the common father, by various methods of discipline, awakes from their error and trains by degrees for their designed happiness. And others, impenitent and unreformed by all the efforts of his mercy, choose this baser inheritance, and renounce all their greater privileges.

CAN we now say, that it becomes Divine Goodness to establish no distinction between creatures, making these contrary uses of his mercies? Can goodness in a governor will any thing contrary to order and the general welfare?

LET us only take these two things along with us, that the gospel assures us that punishments will be greater or smaller in exact proportion to the degrees of guilt, and that none but impenitent and irreclaimable sinners are to be finally punished; let us, I say, take these two things along with us; and I am much mistaken, if, upon the common footing of nature, (to which the infidel confidently appeals) the future punishment of the wicked appears not to be a real act, I will not say of justice, but of goodness.

THE only conceivable engines of moral government, are rewards and punishments.

Now though there is no doubt, but that

that happy spirits are confirmed in their state of beatitude beyond the danger of falling, yet their safety cannot flow from any external irresistible impulse of the Deity's; (for this is inconsistent with their free agency) but from one or both of the moral motives, mentioned before; which are only suited to their free-natures. The pleasures of goodness, the consciousness of being as happy as Almighty Power can make them, may be conceived as one powerful motive to their perseverance. But this is not sufficient: many exalted spirits, we know, have already fallen; and what has happened may happen again without some farther provision. The miseries of apostate angels has endeared the innocent state to the happy, and confirmed them in their obedience. And may not the punishment of the reprobate of human kind be equally necessary to confirm the virtuous in that immutable state, which God has promised

mised them, and which can be immutable only under the force of moral motives?

THIS, then, being supposed, or rather indeed ascertained in the discoveries of God, who best knows the secrets of his future kingdom, let me ask you, how the perpetual continuance of this punishment can be inconsistent with the goodness of God? What is goodness but a desire of doing all possible good, of making happiness as general and diffusive, as the nature of things will admit? And is it not an act of this very perfection, to prefer the general welfare to that of individuals, when they happen to interfere; when those individuals have by their depravity rendered themselves incapable of good, and when their punishment is necessary to the general preservation?*

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* IN his hominibus, qui nos, qui conjuges, qui liberos nostros trucidare voluerunt, &c. si *vehementissimi* fuerimus,

WE may thus argue with those, who impiously call the ways of GOD to the bar of human judgment. And upon this footing, it is demonstrable, that there are better reasons for the punishment of the wicked than for their impunity. But, in truth, all his ways are founded in better reasons than what we can suggest or conceive. Our business is to acquiesce in his revealed will, and to discharge our duty with patience: and if we only do this, with that degree of deference usually paid to earthly authority, we shall not want the necessary proportion either of faith or obedience.

WE conceive a deal too highly of our own importance in the scale of being. Look at the immensity of GOD: *Be-*

F 3 *hold!*

mus, misericordes habebimur: Sin remissiores esse voluerimus, summæ nobis crudelitatis in patriæ civiumque perniciæ fama Subeunda est, Cicero. Or. 4. Catil.

bold! the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before him; they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity. Isa. xl. 22. Survey the greatness of his works, call to view the number of the stars scattered through all the vast regions of space, remember that all these are probably vast habitable bodies, the residence of myriads of happy beings discharging the Divine Will in different places and order, and drinking happiness from the universal fountain of good, in proportion to their various capacities; call this to mind, and then say, what is the whole race of man, numerous as they appear to us, upon comparison with this immense, this stupendous prospect?—*They are as nothing before it; they are less than nothing and vanity.* Were they universally blotted from the book of life, their loss were not to be found; the happiness of the creation would

would not be diminished ; the loss would be *as the drop of a bucket* ; the ocean of happiness would be equally abundant, equally immense.

AND if this would be the case, upon the dreadful supposition of our total extinction ; if, on the contrary, the same good Being is constantly also exerting his mercies among the sons of men, if he, by all the various methods of moral discipline, is conducting the greater part of them to glory, and suffers those only to perish, whom no discipline, no instruction, no assistance can reclaim, and whose punishment must be necessary for the welfare of the whole ; what reason have we to expostulate with the Almighty, or dispute the rectitude of his dealings ? *Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God ? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus ?* Rom. ix. 20.

LET us now, under the force of these reflexions, run over the usual

consolations of the sinner; and we shall find them wretchedly trifling, frivolous, and delusive.

MUST the Almighty spare, because our compassion prompts us to wish it? If compassion were the only rule of Divine government, no creature could be miserable. His love far exceeds the poor selfish sympathy of human affection. *Thou comest far short*, says he in Esdras, *that thou shouldest be able to love my creature more than I*. But human happiness depends on other considerations.—But does not punishment suppose anger and vengeance; an idea, inconsistent with the perfection of the Divine mind? It is not anger, but a steady regard to the general interests of the spiritual creation.—May he not, after a long series of ages of suffering, admit them then to happiness? None but the impenitent will suffer; and there is reason to apprehend from what we know of the progress of sin, that it is too possible

fible for wicked creatures to be *hardened* into an *incurable* impenitence.—Why may he not annihilate them, and put an end to their being and sufferings together? The interests of virtue require that wickedness should be punished, and the reasons, that render it necessary at all, may continue as long as heaven subsists.—Why should he create beings, who, he must foresee, would make an improper use of their liberty? This is to ask, why he made the world at all; for if man was to be created at all, it was necessary he should be left *in the hands of his own counsel*. — But will it not rather be an abatement than addition to the felicity of the blessed, to see their poor fellow creatures, whom they have seen and known and conversed with here on earth, hung up, as it were, to be spectacles of misery and monuments of vengeance? All earthly relations will cease with the grave; the only distinction afterwards will be good and bad, and

and there will be no more communion between these than between light and darkness. The sympathy we feel here is a blind instinct, embracing good and bad, just as they happen to be connected to us in the relations of life. The bad parent, the profligate child or brother are endeared to us on other accounts independent of their moral character. But when this mixt imperfect scene is over, and all earthly connexions cease together with it; the employment and happiness of our affections will lie in contemplating the Divine perfections and works, and cultivating the intercourse and communion of innocent spirits.

BUT if we must judge from natural instincts, there is one, which cannot deceive us; I mean, that secret dread and horror of futurity, which nothing but the grossest stupidity or corruption can extinguish. There is no passion in nature without its correspondent object. Have we an instinct of compassion? We
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are connected here in a social state, which requires such a principle of union. Do we dread hunger, and thirst and pain? we have bodies capable of suffering under these sensations. But where shall we find an object for the sinner's horror, under a sense of crimes, hid under an impenetrable veil of darkness? It plainly points to futurity, and warns him to guard against the punishment awaiting him there. It is not the effect of superstition, or the prejudice of education from the tales of priests and nurses. It is a natural impression, which every man, Jew or Gentile, Christian or Heathen, must feel in every age and place, where he acts deliberately against what he knows to be his duty.* And happy they

* THE doctrine of Epicurus was so far espoused at Rome in Cataline's time, that Cæsar very roundly and gravely avows one of his worst tenets in open senate. It may well be supposed, that Cataline was as well acquainted with these comfortable principles; and yet see the power of natural conscience,

they, who will now, in this their day, listen to this Divine Remembrancer, that they may direct its reproaches to their proper purpose, and save themselves *from the wrath to come!*

A MINISTER of religion is considered as a savage unfeeling bigot, who ventures to treat of these harsh things with proper severity. For my own part, *my heart's desire, and prayer to God is that all men may be saved; and, if conceal-*
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science, as described by an historian almost as profligate as himself! Animus impurus, diis hominibusque infestus, neque vigiliis neque quietibus sedari poterat; ita conscientia mentem excitam vexabat! Igitur color ei exsanguis fædi oculi: citus modò, modò tardus incessus: prorsus in facie vultuque vecordia inerat. SALL.

WE have a similar instance in the monster Tiberius: Circa deos ac religiones negligentior, tonitrua tamen præter modum expavescebat: et turbatiore cælo nunquam non coronam lauream capite gestavit, quod fulmine afflari negetur id genus frondis. Suet. in Tib. c. 69. *His letter to the senate is well known:* Quid scribam vobis, P. C. aut quomodo scribam, aut quid omninò non scribam, hoc tempore, dii me dæque pejus perdant, quam quotidie perire sentio, si scio. id. 67. Tacitus Ann. 6. 6. *See the latter's excellent reflexions upon it.*

ing and palliating of dangers were a proper method of removing them, I should very readily indulge the weakness of a slumbering world, *speaking smooth things and prophecy deceits*: but knowing that God Almighty has thought the fear of hell a necessary restraint on human corruption, *seeing* in fact, that it is scarce sufficient to confine our enormities within tolerable bounds, *believing* too, that it is inconsistent with Divine Perfection to threaten what he cannot execute, to use artifice and illusion (the mere effect of human impotence) in his government; *knowing*, I say, *these terrors of the Lord*, we persuade men, and are performing the truest act of tenderness towards them. When your neighbour's house is kindling about his ears, the cruelty is to let him sleep on and take his rest, to his destruction — to rouse him from the sweets of slumber and lend a friendly hand to rescue him from the flames, is the true act of humanity.

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ON the lowest supposition, it is as probable at least, that there is a hell, as that the wicked shall escape unpunished. For heaven's sake, what difficulties can we meet with, in a virtuous life, to counterbalance the mere *probability* of an infinite evil? And to brave and defy it, upon the supposition of its reality—I was going to call it the extravagance of madness: but language has no words to express the degrees of such an infatuation.

You meet with men, who think it something great and heroic, to appear insensible of danger; and under this false idea of courage, they affect to set the threats of omnipotence at defiance, as a slavish ignoble consideration. But it happens unfortunately for these false spirits, that there is nothing mean in fear: every creature must have his fears.

DIFFERENT men, according to the difference of their views, may place their fear on different objects: but every
one,

one, as having something before him, which he considers as his evil, must have the correspondent passion. The religious man makes the fear of God the rule of his actions, the wicked consider worldly shame, labour, or poverty, as more dreadful evils. With regard to the common passion, they are both upon an equality; but the religious man acts the rational part in dreading the greater evil, and bearing inferior ones with magnanimity.

You meet with others, who say that fear is a servile spirit inconsistent with the generous services of virtue. But there is certainly a merit in being influenced by any motive it pleased God to appoint. Where a man begins to fear properly, he is in a happy way: *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* Fear restrains from sin: this brings on a habit of virtue; this habit becomes a pleasure, and to take a pleasure in virtuous actions as the will of God,

GOD, is, as I take it, the true love of GOD.

IF a man then be wicked, and has not hardened himself beyond the power of repentance, let him not be ashamed to see and confess his danger, and embrace the means, presented to him by religion, of recovering his forfeited inheritance. Christ came into the world to save sinners.

IF a man is still innocent, let him beware of the deceitfulness of sin. No man ever became abandoned, but by degrees. Get out of the right road, and there is no knowing, where the error ends. By losing gradually the sense of shame, fear, and virtue, you may bring yourself to that impenitent hardness of heart, which admits not of a saving repentance.

AT the same time, let not the well-meaning meek-spirited christian abandon himself to gloomy apprehensions, under a sense of slight failings and infirmities

mities. If the heart be truly turned towards God, if you endeavour to improve daily upon yourself, in the regular application of the necessary instrumental duties of religion; you are in a happy way. Blessed are the poor in spirit: Christ died for their sins and rose again for their justification.

WILLIAM W.

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Reliance on Providence

S E R M O N V.

Reliance on Providence.

SEERMON V.



ALTHOUGH THE FRUIT
OF THE TREE SHALL NOT
BE EATEN OF THE
FLOOD SHALL BE
FROM THE FLOOD
BE NO HERB
I WILL KILL THE
WILL JOY
ATION

I T is very early to connect the
that, if vice and virtue
rent to the author of nature, he would
not have distinguished the

SERMON V.

HAB. iii. 17, 18. ✓

ALTHOUGH THE FIG-TREE SHALL NOT
BLOSSOM, NEITHER SHALL FRUIT
BE IN THE VINES, THE LABOUR OF
THE OLIVE SHALL FAIL, AND THE
FIELDS SHALL YIELD NO MEAT,
THE FLOCK SHALL BE CUT OFF
FROM THE FOLD, AND THERE SHALL
BE NO HERD IN THE STALLS: YET
I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD, I
WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SAL-
VATION.

IT is very easy to conceive and allow,
that, if vice and virtue were indiffe-
rent to the author of nature, he would
not have distinguished the one from the

other by any particular marks of approbation and dislike. And yet, it is very visible, even amidst the present disorder of the world, that he has established a very great and essential difference between them: a difference, not lying in flight occasional effects or temporary consequences, (for this might be resolved into mere accident) but fixed deep in the very frame and constitution of things; which could proceed only from purpose or design.

THE world could not subsist without the practice of virtue. Happiness, as far as we can enjoy it in this imperfect state, is wholly the effect of virtue: vice is the cause of our principal and worst distresses. If a nation flourishes, it is virtue, that exalteth it; if a private man is great, and eminent, and useful, it is virtue that forms the character. If, on the contrary, provinces are desolated and fenced cities laid into ruinous heaps, it is vice that occasions the

the devastation; if a man is a burden or scourge to the earth, it is the indulgence of some vicious propensity that puts his mischievous powers in motion. Kingdoms, we see, rise and fall, families flourish and decay, in perpetual succession.* Examine into the causes, and you will find, that industry, temperance, justice and other virtues have occasioned the prosperity — while these virtues continue, and administer, as it were, their vital juices to the root, the plant continues to flourish and bless the world with its useful produce — but as these virtues fail; and sloth, and luxury, and dissipation take place; the scene gradually fades away, disgrace and misery ensue.

WE cannot have a better proof, that the author of nature is engaged in ge-

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neral

* IMPERIUM facile iis artibus retinetur, quibus initio partum est. Verum, ubi pro labore desidia, pro continentia et equitate libido atque superbia invasere; fortuna simul cum moribus immutatur. SAL.

neral on the side of virtue. As to the particular instances, where the righteous and wicked fare alike, where the wicked flourish and the righteous fall into affliction, this shakes not a wise man's faith: secret things belong to God: he may have a thousand reasons for the present ways of his Providence. Our business is to confide, that he, who wants not the means or power to fulfil his purposes, will amply do it, some time or other, in *every* instance, and rectify *every* inequality.

SUCH a reliance on an Almighty and gracious Providence is absolutely necessary to present happiness. Though it enables us not to pass with uninterrupted comfort through life, yet it is the best preparative for all its chances and changes. It heightens every blessing, brightens every prospect, and alleviates every calamity. It is almost health upon the bed of sickness, riches amidst the wants of poverty, liberty amidst the chains

chains of bondage, and hope in the deepest scenes of distress.

A PARADOX as it seems, we are however taught this lesson by the holy prophet. He imagines a dreadful assemblage of the worst of human evils: *Although, says he, the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.* Amidst all this accumulated distress, he is still happy; not,* as philosophic ease and speculation affect to speak, because virtue is sufficient to its own happiness, stripped of all rewards, all foreign consolations; but because he trusts in God. It is from the gracious author of the world, he expects the removal of its present disorders: I will rejoice, says he, IN
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* PAUPERIEM sine dote quaero.

HOR.

THE LORD, I will joy in the God of MY SALVATION.

WE shall enter fully into the views of the text, if we consider the different feelings of vice and virtue, in the two grand states of human life, prosperity and adversity.

IN general, wickedness, upon the lowest calculation: has not greater pretensions to the outward conveniences of life than sincere virtue. The man, who lives in the fear of God, and makes a conscience of his actions, where he exercises the real virtues of active life, must be as truly great, as his unrighteous neighbour.

WHAT, though his inflexible probity stoops not to many sordid means of enriching himself, which the other embraces; what though his diffusive charity scatters some of those superfluities, which the other carefully scrapes together, and anxiously hoards up to enlarge and multiply his possessions? Yet he gets as much as he desires; and, for that
that

that reason, is the truly happy man. His desires are not an insatiable tormenting thirst: he is ever at peace with himself: whatever he acquires, he acquires with integrity, and enjoys with sobriety: It is sanctified by the blessing of God: it is unmixed with anxiety, fear, shame, or remorse: his eye can view it, and his mind reflect upon it, with an innocent exultation.

WHAT though his temperance refrains from many gratifications, which the sons of licentious pleasure greedily embrace? He is much happier in the discipline of his passions: the pleasures of religion are his reward; chearful easy health is the reward of his temperance; a smiling train of children, whom he owns with innocence, whom he views with complacency and an ever-growing delight, who share and augment his joys, who rise up to prop and comfort his declining age, these are

are the rewards of his virtuous pleasures.

PRAY now consider, what has the wicked to set up in competition with these things? Give him what outward blessings you please, let the world smile upon him, and fortune flow in upon him, and outstrip his industry, and even his wishes in her indulgence; yet what is this to a man, who wants peace at home, where all happiness must begin? * It is the mind, that relishes what we have: if that is distempered, outward things lose their satisfaction.

WE deceive ourselves miserably in this matter. The world admires the glare and splendor of an outward figure. We would fain flatter ourselves, that this outward appendage is some compensation

* *Non domus et fundus, non æris acervus et auri
Ægroto domini deduxit corpore febres,
Non animo curas: valeat possessor oportet,
Si comportatis rebus benè cogitat uti.*

HOR.

penetration for the inward feelings of an aching mind, to which the world is an entire stranger.

A WEAK delusion! too vain, to deceive us, even amidst the fondness of our own wishes! For we know at the same time, the world would despise us, if they knew our inward misery; and this consciousness destroys the whole of the consolation. Nay, we despise ourselves, for endeavouring to put a cheat upon the world, which in effect affords us no solid satisfaction.

AMIDST all the artifices of self-deception, this is clear: the comfort of a good conscience is the best of treasures, it may endear a very little to a good mind; but no affluence or abundance can mitigate the feelings of a wounded conscience.

IF this be the case in affluence; what can a bad man do, in the dismal trials of adversity?

ALL men are certainly exposed alike
to

to the changes and reverses of fortune. Misfortunes as often overtake the wicked as his righteous neighbour. He may plan, and contrive, strengthen himself in his wickedness, and think himself secure, and cry, *tush! I shall never be cast down, no harm can happen unto me—* but often, besides the natural uncertainty of human things, some stroke of justice, or unavoidable consequence of his own vices, overtakes him in the midst of his security, and leaves him at once without the comforts of this and a better world, to support him under this distress.

WHAT can be conceived more miserable than a sinner in affliction; a wretch contending with the bitter fruits of his own vices! See the criminal in the hands of justice; or the libertine amidst the poverty and diseases entailed upon him by his debaucheries!—What a figure is that—how little of the man do you see there!—For what has he to furnish

furnish one manly sentiment? to support his sinking spirits? to administer one word of comfort or consolation? He dares not look upwards, towards God; or he looks up with doubts and misgivings; or rather, struggling against his own conviction, he endeavours to wish there may be no avenger of right and wrong. Himself he cannot fly to; for his conscience is his worst accuser. The world has forsaken him, the companions of his sins have been either cut off before, or now look upon him as an outcast, or harrow up his soul with the remembrance of what he was before.

LET us now reverse the scene, and see, how a good man behaves in the season of trial and visitation. He has a common chance of obtaining the blessings of life: if the world frowns upon him and disappoints his honest endeavours, he has not the stinging reflection, that vice and folly brought him to that state. He looks not upon the world as a wild
 ungoverned

ungoverned state; he knows, there is a Providence, governing it by certain general laws, to which he must submit. He submits with chearfulness: his interests cannot be lodged in safer hands. He, *that trusts in God*, really *abideth under the shadow of the Almighty*; and cannot be finally frustrated, where infinite power and goodness preside. He uses this season of reflection, to examine his past life and conversation; he corrects his errors, forms better resolutions; he feels himself improved in the school of affliction, and has the assurance of being rescued either here, or abundantly rewarded hereafter.

It requires, I believe, no great share of experience, to know, that Providence often brings about the happiest issues from incidents of the most ominous unpromising aspect.

ONE man, you see, in the journey of life, goes along happy and well-pleased with himself; the road seems plain and
easy,

easy, the weather is fair, the country presents the most delightful prospects to beguile and amuse his steps: he wants no guide; he is sufficiently secure in his own direction—when, on a sudden, the road vanishes, and he finds himself entangled and lost in wilds, at a distance from all relief and assistance. Another encounters with nothing but disasters: as he just sets off, the skies frown, the road grows rough; darkness overtakes him; gloom and despair lie before him; destruction seems ready to overwhelm him—when, on a sudden, the darkness unexpectedly clears up, the road widens, and he finds himself, contrary to all his hopes, in the place, where he would be, happy, triumphant, and amply rewarded for all his past anxieties.

How many (to drop the metaphor, how many) have found their fondest, best concerted schemes end in misery; how many have been, as it were, surprized into happiness, by means, that

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threatened their utter destruction? There is hardly any one, who cannot recollect occurrences of this kind in his life. He has been disappointed in some favourite wish: that disappointment has been his preservation. His enemies have endeavoured to oppress him: their malice has only served to crown his merit with double honour. — Where we are not wanting to ourselves in industry and perseverance, there is always hope: in the midst of darkness, light suddenly springs up to direct us; want is but an introduction to plenty; sickness serves only to give a truer relish of health, and miscarriage is the direct path and avenue to success.

THERE are, in short, but two or three exceptions to be made, and then we may place our confidence in Providence, without any danger or possibility of deception.

IT is possible, men, not otherwise immoral or ill disposed towards religion,
may

may sometimes want the more enterprizing virtues of active life.* Providence works by certain stated methods, requiring the co-operation of human powers; to expect success in any profession, without taking pains to understand and exercise it; to expect riches without industry and prudence; or health without exercise and temperance, such things are contrary to the Divine laws, and disappointment is in such cases an evil of our own creation.

WE are liable also to evil from the close connexions of society. The good and bad grow up together; their interests are connected; they afford mutual

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support

* Ουδε θεμις ἐστὶ αἰτεῖσθαι παρὰ τῶν θεῶν, οὔτε, ἵππευεῖν μὴ μάδοντας, ἵππομαχούτας νικᾶν· οὔτε, μὴ ἐπισταμένους τοξεύειν, τοξευοντίας κραλεῖν τῶν ἐπισταμένων τοξεύειν· οὔτε, μὴ ἐπισταμένους κυβερνᾶν, σωζεῖν εὐχεσθαι ναυς κυβερνωτίας, &c. παρὰ γὰρ τῆς τῶν θεῶν θεσμῆς πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐστὶ· τῆς δὲ ἀθεμιστὰ εὐχομένους ὁμοίως εἰκός ἐστι παρὰ θεῶν αὐτῆς, ὥσπερ καὶ παρὰ ἀνθρώπων ἀπραγλείν τῆς παρανομῆς δομένους.

Xeneph. Cyrop. L. 1.

support and shelter to one another: where one is cut down, as it happens with the trees of the forest, others, in proportion to their proximity, must suffer by the fall.

THIS world, besides, is a state of moral discipline; and it often happens, that a course of trials and afflictions is most conducive to our final happiness. We know not what is best for us, amidst the shortness of our views and pettishness of froward appetites.* Many, who have coveted honour, and riches, and ease, have found them to be snares; and we know not, what effect they might have upon our tempers.—It pleased God to visit St. Paul with what he calls *athorn in the flesh*, some great and trying affliction. Feeling, like other men, he prayed for its removal: but the gracious inflicter,

* PRO bonis mala amplectimur, optamus contra id, quod optavimus, pugnant nostra vota cum votis, consilia cum consiliis. Seneca. Ep. 45.

inflicter, to teach him patience, and, through him, to teach all future generations the same valuable virtue, revealed the beneficent tendency of the visitation. It was for his good : it tended to his moral improvement, and, in consequence of that, to the increase of his future reward. Here the venerable sufferer had nothing more to say : he submitted to the gracious discipline ; and teaches us, by his example, the wisdom and necessity of resignation.

BUT how happy and full of comfort must a good man be, in this gloomiest season of distress ! He has the consciousness of being at peace with God ; he has a conscience either unstained by sin, or cleansed by the blood of Christ, and the tears of a sincere repentance ; he has the consolations of the holy spirit, and the blessed hopes of immortality to support his fortitude.

TRUE faith raises all the passions above temporary accidents. — Well may

the poor deluded sinner, who confines all his hopes and desires within this narrow sphere, grieve, bewail, and abandon himself to despair, when his worldly comforts forsake him — They were his all: they are his portion and inheritance: they are the only goods, he knows or chuses to pursue. But a spiritual creature has higher views, higher purposes, and should have a superior elevation of soul, and look down upon the revolutions of this present life, as little transient events, in which the man of God is but in a lower degree concerned. A safe and quiet passage to the grave, is all he requires: his final interest lies beyond: and where his treasure is, there his heart habitually is, there his principal desires and hopes are fixed: other things move only in subordination to this higher view.

MANY men, from motives of private ease and worldly prudence, have kept themselves from being too deeply interested

rested in the busy, noisy, tumultuous conflicts of life: the philosophic mind thinks it necessary to happiness to be abstracted from it, to hear its din and tumult at a safe distance, and to view the ruffled scene with sedate undisturbed indifference. And what shall we think then of the christian's choice and happiness, whose mind is capable of such an elevation, that he can look down upon life and all its temporary interests and evils with magnanimity and generous contempt?

SUCH christians have existed in every age of the church: such a man, every one may be, by a proper use of the instrumental duties of religion.

WHETHER faith be, as some make it, the cold deliberate assent of the mind upon a course of rational deduction, or, as others say, the effect of Divine Grace on an honest ingenuous heart, or rather whether there be not something of both, in its origin and progress; this is cer-

tain; faith is but a dead principle, unless it be quickened and invigorated by frequent and habitual exercise in the various offices of religion.

AND happy the man, (to return again from this digression) happy he, who studies to have this faith, *this true victory, which overcometh the world!* He is prepared for all states, and all vicissitudes of fortune.

HE considers himself as living under a MORAL GOVERNOR, who is conducting man to future happiness, by the various methods of his present Providence. Living ever under a sense of his authority, he receives prosperity as his mercy with gratitude, and his visitations, as necessary remedies of his corruption, with humility and submission. Thus every thing assumes a chearful aspect around him. Disappointment, sickness, poverty, and other natural evils are considered by him as necessary instruments of future glory. Kept by
Divine

Divine Justice from presumption, and by Mercy from despair, he goes on in an uniform course of virtue. The worst state of life has its consolations, and death is stripped of all its terrors. He has a FRIEND THROUGH LIFE, without whose permission no accident can molest him, and to whose immediate presence death is but a short and easy passage.

IT is, surely, the interest only of the most abandoned of creatures, to wish God out of the world.* *Why, says the excellent heathen Emperor, should I live in a world, undirected by a God, and unguarded by a Providence?* It is the gloomiest of thoughts, and to entertain it, is either the effect of extreme corruption or deplorable ignorance.

THE first wish, a man can form, is to have a conscience, as far as possible, void of offence towards God and man.

For

* ΤΙ ΜΟΙ ΣΗΝ ΕΝ ΚΟΣΜΩ ΜΕΝΩ ΘΕΩΝ, ἢ ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑΣ ΜΕΝΩ ;

Anton. 2. 11.

For a clear conscience is the principal source of present happiness.

IT is hard to be quite at peace with one's self, when the mind labours with the remembrance of great sins. Though God has forgiven and blotted out the guilt, it is very hard for a man to forgive himself. The memory of his transgressions will be frequently rising, to cloud his hopes and embitter his enjoyments. It is with the mind, as it is with the body after some great hurt or grievous wound; every change of weather, every slight disorder, every touch and accident, affects the diseased part, and revives all the former pains. Whereas a sound mind is the source of continual comfort: it is ever healthy, and vigorous, and supports itself under all changes and accidents.

BUT this is a happiness, that falls not to every man's share. Where, then, persons have unfortunately gone astray, their business is to return with
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all haste out of the path of destruction. There is no peace for the wicked either here or hereafter. But if he turns from his evil ways, and seeks an acquaintance with God, he may still be at peace. Though God suffers the memory of his old faults sometimes to rise, for the sake of preserving him more steadily in the good way; yet, upon the man's sincere repentance, through the merits of Christ, he assuredly forgets his iniquities and blotteth out all his misdeeds. The returning prodigal has no more to fear than his elder brother, who deserted not his father's service. Upon his real repentance, that is (to speak intelligibly and avoid misapprehension) upon his *ceasing to do evil and learning to do well* and practising the contrary virtues; he may assure himself of a hearty acceptance and reconciliation with the father of spirits and live. He will be accepted in proportion to the sincerity of his reformation, and his actual progress in a good life.

life. And if he can outstrip his elder brother in the graces of a christian life, he may even still be more highly accepted.

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S E R M O N VI.

Patience under Afflictions.



S E R M O N VI.

ii. TIM. iv. 5.

ENDURE AFFLICTIONS. ✓

HAPPY is the man, who lives and dies in the fear of God, whatever be his present portion! Be it poverty, disgrace, sickness, or captivity; yet, if it secures to him an inheritance with God, his lot is above princes, and all their transitory glories!

FOR nothing is good or evil to any creature, but as it promotes or obstructs his principal end. If, by the indisposition of a day, you could secure to yourself the comforts of a long and happy old age; you would hardly consider

sider it as an evil, you would embrace it as a blessing rather than a misfortune. If, then, a life of suffering tends certainly to secure to you a happy eternity; why should you not, in parity of reasoning and prudence, bear it with patience, rather than murmur under it as an insupportable affliction?

AFFLICTIONS, disagreeable as they are to our animal feelings, have the happiest influence upon our tempers and better interests. *When the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.* Isa. xxvi. 9. There is no class of mankind, to which they are not adapted: they tend to *reform the vicious—to improve the careless—and to perfect the virtuous.*

WHILE the world smiles around us, while the weather is fair, and a favourable breeze drives us along, on we sail careless and secure: we resign ourselves to sport and pleasure: Lost in the enjoyment

joyment, we think not of the author of our happiness : we dread no change : it is not, *till the windy storm ariseth*, that we learn to know ourselves and *call upon the Lord*. An even course of things, an uninterrupted flow of success, lulls us into security : we abandon ourselves to a sottish forgetfulness of God. Whereas the corrections of the Almighty make us serious, vigilant, and attentive. Reason awakes from its slumbers : conscience, beguiled before by a succession of amusements or stupified by intemperance, begins to speak the honest language of truth.

IT *was good for me*, says David, *that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes : for before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word*. Ps. cxix. 67, 71. And this he spoke from the happiest experience. He had passed through the several stages of adversity with firmness and integrity. Temptations assailed him in vain : his

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trials

trials were his happiness: they but confirmed his innocence; they gave double lustre to his virtues.—Alas! how little do we know of our true happiness! — Prosperity, the great object of his wishes, was his greatest snare. Softened by the charms and blandishments of a prosperous fortune, he fell into the worst of crimes, from which nothing but the visitation of God awakened him again.

MANASSEH is an example of a similar reformation. He was, as we read, *more wicked than all the Kings of Judah and Israel*. But, carried away into captivity, his errors appeared in all their horrors: his eyes were opened: he returned as eminently good, out of the school of affliction, as he was abandoned before, in the thoughtless gaiety of abundance.

WHEN the world, then, has this effect upon any man, the greatest blessing God can shew him, is to visit him with
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some awakening judgment; and that man, who uses this season of serious reflexion for the purpose of examining into his past life and conversation, bewailing his transgressions, and resolving to begin and pursue a better course for the remainder of his life, will amply find his account in it. He will either find his evils removed in God's good time, or will bear them with patience as a judgment greatly inferior to his deserts. For the wages of sin, which God thus corrects in him, is much greater than any thing he can suffer in life: the wages of unreprieved and unrepented sin is eternal death.

THERE are, in particular, some evils, which are the necessary consequences of vicious courses; and a removal of these no wise man can well expect of God, as governing the world by certain general stated methods, which he cannot alter upon every little exigency of individuals. Sobriety is the natural

means of health, and industry of a comfortable subsistence. Where, therefore, poverty is the effect of extravagance, diseases the effect of riot, and ill success the effect of temerity and profusion; these things indeed must be looked upon as God's visitations (for it was he, who established this connexion between wickedness and misery) but they cannot be expected to be removed by an extraordinary interposition of Providence.* Where they are remediable, our own endeavours must co-operate with his blessing; where they are not, they must be submitted to, as the fatal effects of our own misconduct—to continue for life; but not beyond it,

* *Poscis opem nervis, corpusq; fidele senectæ:
 Esto, age: sed grandes patinæ, tucetaq; crassa
 Annuere his superos vetuere, Jovemq; morantur.
 Rem struere exoptas cæso bove, Mercuriumque
 Arcessis fibrâ: da fortunare penates,
 Da pecus, et gregibus fætum—quo, pessime, pacto,
 Tot tibi cum in flammis junicum omenta liquecant?*

PERS.

it, upon our true repentance and sincere humiliation.

I PROCEED now to a second purpose of affliction. It tends to awaken the thoughtless, to confirm the weak, and to call them to a proper consideration of their purpose in the world.

MANY, who are not remarkably wicked, may be, however, too much pleased, too much transported with their present situation. Indeed a sense and relish of the blessings we enjoy, is the foundation of the gratitude and adoration, we owe to the Divine Being: but, some how, a constant uninterrupted series of prosperity, has a contrary effect. It softens and enervates the mind, and cools the more generous affections. Basking in the comfortable warmth and influence of easy circumstances, we think *it good to be here*; we want no better country; we look for no higher inheritance. But adversity reminds us of our imperfect state, and

obliges us to seek those comforts in another, which we find not here.

It is certain, we are more sensible of blessings under the absence of them, than in the fullness and satiety of enjoyment. We best know the value of health, under the pangs of a severe disorder; we know the pleasure of liberty under the solitude and rigour of confinement. The stated returns and vicissitudes of the seasons we consider, upon account of their regularity, as things of course: rejoicing in their influence with a supine thoughtless sort of complacency, we hardly think of the being, who appointed them for the benefit of man. But, when a change comes, and the earth denies her fruits and the sun withdraws his heat; then, struck with the novelty, we begin to reflect, and see the reason of acknowledging our own impotence, and looking upwards for assistance and relief. It is thus, in general, with afflictions. We begin not
fully

fully to know ourselves, till necessity puts us upon the disagreeable task. Worldly blessings are not so thoroughly considered as the gift of God, till he has convinced us, by the removal of them, that he is the sovereign arbiter and disposer of human fortunes. Even self-love is of service to us in pointing out this conclusion; for when we see others unfortunate, we consider imprudence, dissipation, and the like, as causes of their miscarriage; but personal affliction brings the conclusion home to our own selves, and forces us to acknowledge a first cause in all these things.

WHETHER we consider it or not, we are all travelling on towards the grave, the common end of all the living. There a new and unalterable scene opens. *They that have done good go into everlasting life; they that have done evil into everlasting punishment.* — Pray now, consult yourself; when do you think most of these things, in the serious thoughtful

hour of affliction, or the giddy tumultuous season of gaiety and abundance? * Alas! few, of choice, think of this gloomy scene: it is necessity alone that reconciles it to our minds. The rich and happy consider death as an enemy, that tears them from their enjoyments; the unhappy embrace it as an asylum and refuge from their distresses. Now, if the greatest wisdom on this side the grave is, as one expresses, *to learn to die*, if this lesson is best learnt in the school of affliction; would not this be sufficient, if we wanted other arguments, to recommend a patient submission under so useful, so salutary a discipline?

BUT

* LUCIAN touches this with his usual pleasantry and good sense: και τῶν ἑδὲν ὁλως αὐτῆς εἰσερχέσθαι, ἐς' ἂν εὐπραγίῳσι. οἶαν δὲ σφαλῶσι, πολὺ τὸ στίβοι, καὶ αἰ, αἰ, καὶ ὦμοι μοι· εἰ δ' εὐδὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐνενοήν ὅτι θνητοὶ τε εἰσὶ αὐτοὶ, καὶ ὀλίγον τῶτον χρόνον ἐπιδημησάντες τῷ βίῳ, ἀπιασι, ὥσπερ ἐξ οὐειράδος, πάντα ὑπὲρ γῆς ἀφελῆς, ἐζῶν τε ἂν σωφρονεσέρον, καὶ ἡτίον ἠνιωγντο ἀποθανόντες.

Tom. 1. Ed. Bleau. p. 354.

BUT granting, lastly, that the sufferer is good and virtuous; afflictions have still their use: they tend to perfect our virtues, and brighten our future reward. When good men find themselves suffering under distress, and see their profligate neighbours surfeiting in abundance; when they have the loss of wives, friends, or children, the support and comfort of their age, to deplore, while worse men *have children at their desire and leave the rest of their substance to their babes*; they are tempted, with the psalmist, to doubt almost of a righteous Providence; *their feet are almost gone*; they almost repent of their integrity. “What have I
“done; they cry, that I should suffer so
“severely? Why have I washed my hands
“in innocence; and yet be like those
“who have not God in all their thoughts?
“Why am I distinguished only by a
“hapless pre-eminence in afflictions?

God has various ends in his visitations. There is no one too good to be benefitted

benefitted by his correction. There are many secret faults, too apt to escape the careless eye of a mind at ease : and if adversity makes you look deeper into yourself, if it makes you cultivate a closer and more intimate acquaintance with God, it will improve your virtue, and, consequently encrease your reward. As the fire separates the gold from the dross, so virtue, when tried, comes forth brighter and purer from the furnace of adversity. There is a brighter crown prepared for approved virtue : *The patient abiding of the meek cannot perish forever, or fail of a suitable reward. Having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded; for God proved them and found them worthy of himself.* Wisd. iii. 5.

THESE things will be allowed to be the proper fruits of afflictions. But the greatest difficulty still remains : How shall

shall we learn to bear them? * It is easy to talk of patience under the shade of indolent retirement, and the comforts of prosperity; but how are evils to be supported in the hour of trial, under the keen irresistible feelings of nature?

THE answer is short: It is the will of GOD, that we should endure afflictions; and to his will must we submit. He enjoins nothing that is impossible. He forbids not sorrow, as absolutely unworthy of virtue; he forbids us only to sorrow as men without hope. *No chastening* (says the apostle) *for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous.* Heb. xii. 11.

AND indeed nature seems to claim it as a sort of ease and relief under her distresses. To a throbbing heart tears are a kind of refreshment; and groans in a manner

* FACILE omnes, cum valemus, recta consilia ægrotis damus:

Tu si hîc sis, aliter sentias.

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manner break the force of an afflictive pang. Accordingly, the innocent captive may sigh under his chains; and the virtuous sick complain upon his bed of languishing. The man after God's own heart drops the tributary tear over the urn of his friend or his child. But, when nature has discharged her torrent, may not religion come in then to her relief, and pacify and reconcile her to her afflictions?

It is one effectual means of moderating our sorrows, to consider the salutary ends and purposes of affliction. Though reflection may not immediately work a cure; yet a repetition and habit of it may, by degrees, establish a principle of fortitude. We all know the power of constitution in cases of this nature; and yet we see very weak and timid spirits, contrary to constitution, sometimes perform prodigies of courage upon false principles of honour or reputation.

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IT is a christian's fault, if he cannot reason himself into some degree of fortitude in trials of Divine appointment : he proceeds upon firmer and more rational motives, and is sure of a solid and permanent reward.

WE pass through tedious courses of instruction in youth, to prepare ourselves for some useful profession in future life ; we undergo disagreeable remedies to establish health ; we are ready to part with any useful member for the preservation of life ; we undergo labours to provide for the wants of age ; the epicure can fast, to procure a relish for some favourite dish ; the miser can abstain from fraud, when he has some greater gain in view to reward his present self-denial.

FOR heaven's sake, having such plain examples from the children of the world, is not the christian inexcusable, who cannot learn to bear the transient
disci-

discipline of affliction upon the certain prospects of immortality?

IT is in every one's mouth, that this life is but a state of probation. Yes, it is a state of sin and misery; and we can never be happy, till we get into a purer world. Why will we not apply this knowledge? Look where you will around you, and you are taught this application. What do the wretched inhabitants of a lazar house want but the speediest relief from their infirmities? What does the toiling mariner want but the speediest passage to the peaceful harbour? Or the traveller, but the safest return to his native land? Does the husbandman expect the ease and comfort of harvest, amidst the toils of spring? Does the labourer expect rest, before the grateful shades of evening call him to his retreat? — Our business is to get to heaven, as pure and perfect as we can. Whatever tends most to this end is our truest happiness.

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IT will strengthen our resolution, if we consider, that we are really ignorant of our genuine tempers and interests. Many have been innocent in a low estate, who would have been miserable in a more exalted sphere: Many faithful, under subjection, who would have been insolent in power; humble and modest in poverty, who would have been licentious in affluence. Let us commit our interests to the hands of God. He loves us better than we can ourselves: he knows all our wants before we ask him. We cannot put ourselves under better conduct: The road he points out to us cannot be wrong: Unerring wisdom and goodness, must finally lead us to eternal life.*

ALL

* NIL ergo optabunt homines? si consilium vis
Permites ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris.
Nam pro *jucundis aptissima* quæque dabunt Di.
Carior est *illis* homo, quam *sibi*.

Juv. 10. 346.

ALL the blessings of this world are talents, of the exercise and improvement of which the Divine giver expects a faithful account. The more we have, the greater and more complicated our charge. They afford but a burthenfome and painful sort of pre-eminence : to covet them, is to covet what may be your trouble, perhaps your condemnation.

“ UNWORTHY *servant*, remember that
“ *thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good*
“ *things, and likewise Lazarus his evil*
“ *things; and now he is comforted and*
“ *thou art tormented.*”

WHEN we consider seriously, that this is a rebuke, to which abused prosperity is certainly exposed in a future world; a man is almost tempted to pray against the seduction of wealth, and to cry, “ be my lot with the virtuous sufferer, that my inheritance may be
“ with him.”

WHATEVER we have is the gift of
GOD :

GOD : whatever it be, it is gratuitous. Prosperity calls for our gratitude, and adversity requires our submission. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name :* He still deserves my adoration ; he has not left me without some resources ; those are still his gift ; he might have withdrawn these also, (for the *whole* I have is his sole bounty ;) and as for the rest I leave it to the superior wisdom and goodness of his Providence.

WHAT indeed can be more absurd than a contrary behaviour ? A discontented, querulous, impatient temper is its own torment. It encreases and aggravates the smart, and adds double force to the calamity. Every fresh reflection makes that wound bleed anew, which would have healed by degrees amidst the patient silence of resignation. Patience alleviates what it cannot cure ; it lightens the burden it cannot remove. Evils can never hurt us but by our own fault :

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the evils of correction are for our good ; the evils of punishment are the necessary penalty of disobedience.

To conclude : amidst all distresses and all afflictions, there is one sovereign consolation ; if we submit ourselves to God, we cannot be miserable. His grace is sufficient to make us triumph over every difficulty. The dignity of conscious innocence, the hopes of immortality, and the secret inspirations of the Holy Spirit infuse a peace which passeth all understanding, in the gloomiest scenes of horror and distress.

WHERE we want this, we either want faith ; or have the memory of some old sins to destroy the comforts and tranquillity of a good conscience.

IF our conscience is clear, we have nothing to fear ; occasional weaknesses and indispositions of mind affect not our essential interests : they are the excusable effects of weak spirits and a frail constitution. But if we have any
sins

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·fins upon our mind, affliction should lead us to repentance. It will then have its proper use, and we may safely throw ourselves upon the merits of that advocate, who died for our offences and rose again for our justification.

MEMORANDUM

For the purpose of the present investigation, it is necessary to determine the extent to which the various factors mentioned in the preceding report have influenced the results of the experiments. It is found that the factors mentioned in the preceding report have influenced the results of the experiments to a considerable extent.

MEMORANDUM

Of Reimbursement

28 SE 60

S E R M O N VII.

Of Redemption.



S E R M O N VII.

ROM. v. 1.

WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD, THROUGH
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

SIMPLICITY, which every thing human approaches in proportion as it is perfect, is remarkably visible in what we know of the natural Providence of God. The various motions of the material world, the revolutions of the vast luminaries above us, and the operations of the elements around us, depend upon one single principle. We call it attraction; we know there is such a thing in nature; we understand and calculate its effects and uses. But what

this principle is, and how it operates, no one pretends to explain or understand.

Whether free creatures are capable, upon the whole, of being guided by such simple methods, as matter, is a question. But we are led from the knowledge we have of nature, to receive and admire the wonderful appointment of the common Maker in the *moral* world. For there is here one universal principle; one common Mediator to support, assist, and govern our moral powers by his influences. Here is one common method of salvation. And though there are some parts of this scheme above our comprehension; yet this ignorance deprives us not of its benefits and uses.

But such is the perverseness of man; we admit those things in nature, which we stumble at in revelation. We strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. We take not the word of God himself for things, which we implicitly believe in
other

other cases, where our lusts and prejudices are not concerned.

THE scripture account of the state of man is not, as I take it, without its difficulties. But as it gives us a clear consistent view of our state, as it solves most of the appearances in the moral world, as we sink into total darkness the moment we lose this light to assist our views; a rational person should be inclined to receive it upon its own evidence, independent of its Divine authority.

REVELATION considers man in a fallen, imperfect state. Free will, which, it seems, is a necessary privilege of rational creatures, soon introduced misery and corruption into the creation. A gracious remedy was provided for this defection. A scheme of mercy, under the mediation of that Divine person, who formed the world at first, was established, to rectify all disorders, to atone for our sins, to help our infirmities, and
raise

raise us to our lost immortality. By a gradual process of moral discipline, regularly opening and unfolding itself, this Mediator, bringing good out of all this confusion, will in time establish a new heaven and new earth the abode of righteousness: man will be happier than he was before; and, looking back through the maze of Providence, which had perplexed and embarrassed him so much before, will see nothing, but wisdom and goodness and order shine through the whole extensive plan.

COMPARE with this, the gloomy view, that unassisted nature gives us of ourselves, and we shall then learn to put a proper value upon this small degree of acquaintance with Divine mysteries.

LAY aside your bible; divest yourself of what traditional religion has taught you; look around you, take your sentiments from your present abode, and see what they are in this unenlightened state.

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Do you know, where you are?—Are you acquainted with your state, and destination? *—Do you not feel to yourself, like a shipwrecked man, cast upon a desert shore, ignorant where you are, and what is to become of you?—Here you find yourself—in a small corner of the world—what it is, when it began, what is to become of it, you know not. You came not here of yourself—if you have the curiosity to look beyond your immediate parents, and to search about for some superior author of your existence—yet, do you know, who that Being is, what he expects of you, what relation you bear to him? You are surrounded with a strange mixture of blessings, and evils—is it not a doubt with you, whether he sent you here in kindness or displeasure? You have an insatiable

* ——— ignari hominumq; locorumq;

Erramus, vento huc et vastis fluctibus acti.

Virg. Æn. 1. 336.

fatiable desire after happiness—yet every thing you try, deludes, disappoints, or disgusts you. You are directed by your reason—impetuous passions interpose. These two parts are equally natural to you—yet they are ever at variance, opposing, thwarting, and torturing one another.

IN a short time, after leading this wretched incoherent life, disease and infirmity come on; you grow weary of the world—yet a certain instinct makes you unwilling to die. You hate life, yet are afraid to lose it. Nature gave you an appointed time—yet she has not reconciled you to her appointment. You die then at last in the same perplexity, in which you lived; amidst fears and wishes; uncertain where you are going, and what is to be your portion.

IF the religious account of man has its difficulties; certainly this is worse: this is surrounded with insurmountable dif-

difficulties, with palpable contradictions.

BLESSED be GOD! if we take the Gospel for our guide, we have there light enough to unravel our difficulties; and comfort enough, to animate us under all our distresses.

THIS state is not the original creation of GOD. He is raising us from it, by the mediation of his Son, to a state of perfect peace innocence and happiness in a better world. All present evils, grievous as they are, have a tendency, if properly received, to promote this end. Nothing, but the grossest disbelief, can defeat this purpose.

I. In examining the extent and progress of redemption, we are immediately encountered with, by one great difficulty, which has staggered the faith of many, and rendered some unwilling to admit the universality, and others even the reality of this Divine mercy.

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The difficulty is, what is to become of the great majority of mankind, the nations, which never heard of this salvation; if it be really necessary to the whole race of man.

BUT it is a gross error, to consider the gospel as a *partial* religion, confined to a few ages and countries of the world. It is the religion of mankind.

REDEMPTION is as universal a gift as creation. *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

THOUGH, for reasons best known to GOD, it was necessary that the Mediator should live and die and suffer in some part of this vast œconomy; yet all generations, from the first beginning to the end of the world, share alike in the benefits of his atonement. The benefits of the mediatorial scheme began with sin, and continue as long as sin continues reclaimable.

IF you ask me how the ages *before Christ* received these benefits, I answer
that

that it was by the pious use of sacrifices.* There is no tolerable account to be assigned of their institution, but that they were appointed by heaven, immediately upon the fall, to prefigure the *great sacrifice* of the Redeemer, and to appropriate its salutary effects to serious worshippers by faith and repentance. The only difference between them and latter generations is, that they looked forwards towards it through the shadows and types by which it was exhibited to their faith; we in these later ages receive and believe and apply it as a past event.

BUT the difficulty, you will say, still
remains :

“ * AFTER all, that has been wrote upon the subject
“ of sacrifices, I am still forced to ascribe their origin to
“ Divine appointment : to ascribe such an institution, as
“ this of sacrificing animals, wholly to the invention of
“ men, especially to the men of those times, seems very
“ unnatural.” *Bishop Law’s Theory of Relig.* p. 50.

Dr. Delany has proved this Divine appointment in a manner equally lively and satisfactory. *Rev. examined with Candour.* Vol. 1. Diss. 8.

remains : what becomes of the heathens, who soon lost the spiritual purpose of the institution, amidst the uncertainty of traditional religion ; and of the numerous modern nations, who have never heard of Christ or his atonement ?

THE general mercies of God depend not upon human error and corruption. His preserving Providence, whether we gratefully reflect upon it, or not, invariably acts for the good of man. The sun shines, the heavenly bodies move, the elements act for the promiscuous use of the thankful and unthankful. Thus too it is in religion : though the increasing corruptions of the world induced him to enter into a new covenant with Abraham and his posterity ; yet his general mercy through a Redeemer was still extended to the common race of mankind ; they had sufficient powers to work out their salvation ; and such blinded but well-meaning worshippers, as had the proper moral dispositions,
were

were in their proportion as acceptable worshippers, as others who sacrificed in faith. Modern unbelievers stand upon the same footing: all the great essential blessings of the mediatorial scheme assist their well-meant endeavours of living up to their respective degrees of light.

It would be a dry and tedious detail, to enter into the discussion of the several texts of scripture, upon which these propositions depend: but all center in this important and adorable conclusion, THAT THERE IS NO HAPPINESS FOR MANKIND BUT BY THE ONE GREAT SACRIFICE, THAT WAS OFFERED UP TO GOD BY HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

NEITHER *is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby they can be saved. Acts iv. 12. He is the way, and the truth, and the life: none cometh to the Father, but by him. John xiv. 6. He is the lamb slain from the foundation of*

the world. Rev. xiii. 8. *The lamb that taketh away the sins of the world.* John i. 29.

I HAVE often endeavoured, with the utmost candour I am capable of, to find out some colour of reason for the great prepossessions, entertained by several, who call themselves christians, against the doctrine of atonement. My enquiries have ever ended in astonishment. This doctrine is so far the soul and essence of all revealed religion, that, be the scriptures ever so mangled and tortured by ingenuity, yet the general truth still speaks and lives, as it were, in this dismembered state.

AND why so many difficulties in admitting the testimony of God upon this comfortable and important doctrine? Is there any difference, with regard to the honour of God, whether he *originally* made the world such an imperfect state of moral discipline as we find it at present; or whether he *suffered* it to become

come so, with an intention of bringing greater order out of the confusion? Is there any difference, whether he pardons sin and gives grace *immediately* himself; or appoints *instruments* of conveying these blessings to us? Is there not a sort of mediatorial scheme running through all nature? Are not our lives given and supported by the instrumentality of second causes? Is not knowledge given us by the mediation of our fellow-creatures, by the several methods of culture and instruction? And why may there not be a higher instrument of conveying spiritual graces which are of still higher importance?

Do you disclaim this, because there is something *mysterious* in it? You may as well then disclaim the state of nature; for that has something, as I showed before, *still more mysterious* in it: you may as well deny the existence of things

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around you ; for every thing you see has something in it above your comprehension.*

OR does your ignorance of the nature of this scheme destroy its uses and benefits upon you? That is an absurd pretence : we enjoy the uses of plants and animals, though we are ignorant of their structure ; we enjoy the uses of the elements, though we understand not their nature ; and we enjoy the uses of the heavenly bodies, though we know not the cause of their revolutions.

THE

* *Dean Swift's* defence of Mysteries is as solid, I think, as it is diverting.

“ For my part, says he, having considered the matter impartially, I can see no reason, which those gentlemen, you call *free thinkers*, can have for their clamour against religious mysteries ; since it is plain, they were not invented by the clergy, to whom they bring no profit, nor acquire any honour. For every clergyman is ready, either to tell us the utmost he knows, or to confess that he does not understand them ; neither is it strange, that there should be mysteries in divinity, as well as in the commonest operations of nature.”

Advice to a young Clergyman.

THE scripture account is plain and instructive. We are fallen creatures: a Divine person thought it necessary to redeem us into a better state: if this cannot, nothing can, render us willing to comply with his terms and to exert the powers we really possess.

WERE it matter of indifference, whether men believed the gospel or not, whether they were not christians in power as well as name; errors in this case were excusable. But our happiness depends upon it: we live within the light and sphere of christian knowledge: and the universal rule is, that men must live up to the respective degrees of light enjoyed by them.

II. If any man can comfort himself in his moral state without reliance upon Christ's atonement, he must either be a brute or an angel. He must either never reflect upon his condition at all, or must have the happiness of saying, I

am clean, I am quite upright, I have never offended in thought, word, or deed. For what has a finner to save him from destruction? *Without shedding of blood, there is no remission.* Does he rest his plea upon the weakness of nature? The law was intended to guard against the weakness of nature, and to plead this is to plead your guilt as your justification? Do you rely on God's mercy? If you reject his gospel promises, you have nothing but loose floating ideas of his goodness for your support. You see almost as many marks of his severity, as of his goodness about you. The food, which nourishes you, is often your disease; the air, you breathe, often brings plagues; the fanning breeze often becomes a hurricane; the sun, that cherishes you, often scorches and destroys; the fostering dews, often becoming torrents, drown your fields, and sweep away the labours of the year. There is no element,

ment, ever so necessary to human life, which is not frequently the instrument of pain, and mischief. If a thoughtful man, therefore, would rise into a firm and comfortable persuasion of Divine goodness, he must contemplate it in the unsullied mirror of revelation.

EVERY method, that sinful man can use, to procure comfort to himself independent of Gospel Mercy, is unsatisfactory and delusive. Grosser souls go, and seek a partial sort of peace to themselves amidst the stupefaction of riot, and the thoughtless dissipation of amusement. — Alas ! conscience will only awake from this unnatural sleep with greater horror, and, in the short intervals of serious thought allowed it, exert keener and more tormenting reflections. Others endeavour to entrench themselves in impenitence, and to harden themselves in unbelief, and with a kind of fear and trembling to persuade

L 4 them-

themselves that religion is but hypocrisy, and virtue a mere name. Alas! this is but a temporary delusion, adapted only to the season of social mirth, and gay prosperity; the evil day dissipates their false confidence, and leaves them to the angry convictions of awakened reason and conscience. Or if they can carry on the deception to the last, their opinions cannot alter the nature of things: poison, which has often been taken inadvertently, yet never has been known, in compassion to human errors, to suspend the malignity of its effects.

OTHERS again, who are cast in a happier mould, content themselves with the practice of such partial superficial virtues as constitution or profession renders agreeable to them; they are sober, because their health forbids intemperance; liberal from meer compassion or a view to public applause; just, for fear of human punishment and shame. But, at the
same

same time, seeing all men have their failings, they, not distinguishing between failings and vices, live very contented and easy in wicked habits more agreeable to their taste and complexion. Alas! this too is a false confidence. Whosoever uses proper reflection must know, that nothing under universal obedience answers the purposes of law.

THE christian lives as perfectly as he can; he endeavours to improve upon himself in the regular use of the means of grace appointed by Christ. Thus, having an all-sufficient sacrifice to rely upon, his repentance has the merit of innocence, his sincerity the merit of perfection. His conscience has nothing to upbraid him with: he lives as well as he can. His infirmities give him no anxiety: the author of his salvation has promised to purify him to that holiness, which God can view without abhorrence. He is disquieted with no doubts,
distressed

distressed with no fears, under a sense of errors against clear knowledge : God has given him his *express* promise of accepting his imperfect sincere services. He is afflicted by no evils : evils he knows are for his moral improvement, and his Divine pattern, his Saviour, has taught him to bear the evils of the world with patience, to despise its idle glare with magnanimity, and to go about doing good, in dependence upon a future reward.

III. MEN know not what they say, when they talk of leading good and comfortable lives in defiance or in neglect of the graces of the christian covenant. Though the heathens, though the well-disposed, I should say, among them, enjoy the general mercies of redemption ; yet the case is very different with us in our present circumstances. The unconsciousunreflecting beasts of the field, for instance, enjoy the
light

light and heat of the sun as well as man. Pray tell me, is it sense to say, that man owes no acknowledgments to God for these natural blessings, because the lower creatures enjoy them in common with him? Certainly he does: the power of tracing out the author in his works places man in a peculiar situation. In the same manner, Christ enlightens every creature in the moral world: the heathen knows not the author of the power he enjoys; but he lives up to them as well as he can and is accepted. How can this exempt you from proper acts of gratitude and obedience; when you have the means of knowing and acknowledging the real author of this common salvation?*

THE

* If Christ be indeed the mediator between God and man, if he be indeed our Lord, our Saviour, and our God, no one can say, what may follow, not only the obstinate but the careless disregard of him, in those high relations. And, if mankind are corrupted and depraved

THE full truth is, the whole world is in a state of condemnation : we are restored from this state, by the mediation of Christ : the terms are living up to the portion of light we really enjoy. Reason and traditional religion is the heathen's rule : the written word and the ordinances of the christian church is ours. If we reject the terms, we return to our old footing, we sink again into our original state of condemnation.

“ BUT there is (men of a looser turn
 “ tell us) a hardship in this ; the Gos-
 “ pel, so far from being more indul-
 “ gent,

depraved in their moral character, and so are unfit for that state, which Christ is gone to prepare for his disciples, and if the assistance of God's spirit be necessary to renew their nature in the degree necessary to their being qualified for that state, all which is implied in the express but figurative declaration, *except a man be born of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, supposing this, is it possible, any serious person can think it a slight matter, whether or no, he makes use of the means expressly commanded by God, for obtaining this divine assistance ?

Bp. Butler's Anal. 8vo. p. 262.

“gent, calls us to stricter and more ex-
 “alted degrees of virtue.” It is true.
 But there are greater rewards to recom-
 pense, greater means to perfect, our obe-
 dience. “But you would chuse (you
 “reply) to be saved in your own way;
 “less glory hereafter and a looser mora-
 “lity here best suits your taste.” — But
 God has a right to dispense his mercies
 on his own terms; and the express
 terms are faith in Jesus Christ, and a
 compliance with his outward appoint-
 ments and instruments of grace.

THERE is no doubt, but heathens
 are entitled to a happiness suitable to
 their progress in a good and virtuous
 life; but this acquits not such, as con-
 tinue heathens, amidst the light and
 advantage of revelation.

CORNELIUS, *the Roman centurion,*
was a just man, and one that feared God,
and of good report among all the nation of
the Jews. Acts x. 22. A decent fort
 of character you must allow. *He was*
just;

just; here is all the morality you value yourself upon: he fully discharged, as it seems, the several social duties; you hardly carry your pretensions so far. But he goes farther: *he was one who feared God*. You can hardly give *piety*, a place in your scheme of morals: but he thought more rationally; he thought religious gratitude to the author of his being and faculties as much a duty as kindness and justice to his fellow-creatures. Nay, he went farther still: *he was of good report among the Jews*, a nation remarkably exact in their religious services; even amongst these he was exemplary, *he was of good report among all the nation of the Jews*. What wanted such a man to perfect his character? Was not his sincerity sufficient to entitle him to Divine acceptance? Yes, the apostle himself, v. 35. allows it; *in every nation*, says he, *he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him*. And yet still, this man
wanted

wanted something: he lived within the reach of higher privileges and blessings. His sincerity and goodness of temper prepared him; God vouchsafed him the means; and he ascended from moral—to christian perfection. *He was baptized in the name of the Lord.*

THE first constituent part of a christian life are *virtuous morals*: this is that good soil where the seed can only grow. Gospel profession and heathen manners is the greatest of contradictions. If sin were not essentially inconsistent with happiness, Christ had not lived and died and suffered to atone for sin.

THE second is, to practice morals, *upon the principles, and according to the institutions*, established by Christ, the author of our salvation. Were this not the case, the virtuous heathen, just mentioned, was sufficiently perfect before his call; St. Paul as great a saint, when he persecuted, as when he preached, the gospel; Bethsaida, Chorazin, and

and other Jewish cities merited not the severer judgments threatened them by our Saviour for *rejecting the mighty works done among them*; nor had we heard such a declaration to the world in general as the following, *he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall be damned.* Mark xvi. 16.

THE third is to comply with the institutions of religion, according to the established modes of particular visible churches, where there is nothing directly sinful and unscriptural in the terms of communion.—By this means, we shall at once guard against the encroachments of error, and join the *peaceful* temper of the *citizen* to christian virtues. Though the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, though it has a ministry and ordinances of higher original and appointment, yet it came not to disturb the repose of the earth in unnecessary indifferent cases.

IT

IT is indeed ever to be wished, that a spirit of enquiry may be kept up in the world. The interests of truth require it: in a supine unenquiring state, mankind might sink into, and fall asleep under, the grossest errors. Enquiry will produce difference of sentiments, sometimes eager and violent contentions. And this brings on a necessity for a spirit of mutual charity, forbearance, and toleration.*

BUT under these unhappy circumstances, he certainly chooses the better part, who consults the peace and order of the christian state where he lives. Parties and divisions naturally engender strifes, jealousies, and doubtful disputations. No good man, without some valuable end in view, ever encouraged or fomented

M this

* SEE Bp. Warburton's *Alliance between church and state*, where the respective rights of the church and of civil society are reconciled with such solidity and precision; that, I think, it never has, nor can be refuted.

this necessary evil, this honour and disgrace of human nature, this moral hurricane, which, though it purifies the air, yet marks its course with mischief and devastation.

BUT to return to our first point, which is of general and acknowledged importance. To be a christian is necessary to salvation. Eternal life is the *gift of God through Jesus Christ*: by his religion it is to be obtained; and the presages and faint hopes, which he gives us in nature, tend to lead us to this great and ultimate good.

WHAT is there here below, to interfere with this noble pursuit? We are here in a world of vanity: many things tempt us, but nothing fills and satisfies our desires. After ransacking every earthly good, the fever of passion being once over, we find nothing but vexation, distaste, and disappointment. Our desire after happiness is eager, ardent, and insatiable. To satisfy it,
we

we plunge in the muddy stream of sensual delights, we seek honour after honour, add lands to lands, and pile up wealth without measure. In vain : the desire still burns unsatisfied, and still finds something in these, inadequate to its taste and capacity. We vary and diversify our pursuits : the same emptiness and distaste pursues us. At last we are obliged to sit down weary and exhausted, chagrined and disappointed, and have but one poor maxim to console us, that all human pursuits are equally vain. A few wiser men, in the experience of grey hairs, fall a moralizing, and discourage the rising generation from following the mad example. But this too is in vain : the rising generation have their passions, and will have the surer instruction of their own experience. They renew the chase ; until at last too they are tired, and find, when it is too late, that the decay of passion, which brings on grey hairs, is

the season of true wisdom and reflection. Thus the circle of folly goes on ; and, while generation is improving upon generation in other things, here all run on in one servile track, which all find equally delusive.

FOR my part, I am no enemy to the instructions of nature : they lead to the Gospel : nature, disfigured as it is by sin, has not wholly lost her happier tendencies. Follow her here, and she will lead you to everlasting life. She here tells us that we are in an *orphan* state, banished from our true happiness. You see our emblem in the young of animals, snatched away from parental tenderness. They mistake, in the blind direction of instinct, every kind courteous object for their parent ; they solicit from it the natural debt of relief. Thus we, under the bias of corruption, court happiness in things around us. Let us learn from the disappointment, which we universally find here, that
there

there is, however, a true happiness reserved for us in another state, as every real instinct has its proper object.

IF we do this, we shall act as becomes us: nature will lead us to religion, which promises and ensures to us a perfect happiness; a happiness, adequate to our desires, for it is the gift of him, *in whose presence there is FULLNESS of joy*; and commensurate with our duration, for *at his right hand there are pleasures FOR EVERMORE.*

28 SE 60

S E R M O N V I I I .

The Scripture Doctrine of
Repentance.



S E R M O N V I I I .

EZEK. xviii. 27.~

WHEN THE WICKED MAN TURNETH
AWAY FROM HIS WICKEDNESS THAT
HE HATH COMMITTED, AND DOETH
THAT WHICH IS LAWFUL AND
RIGHT, HE SHALL SAVE HIS SOUL
ALIVE.

IN contemplating human nature, there
are two things, which must strike every
man of common reflection. There are,
we see, certain general laws of virtue,
which are necessary to the happiness
and perfection of moral creatures ; and
there

there are infirmities in man, which render him incapable of a strict and proper obedience.

HERE arises a strange repugnance. We all allow, it would be better for the world, if we were universally humane, sincere, and upright; under the benign influence of such tempers, earth would become a sort of paradise. We can suppose too, that if man be destined for an intellectual happiness, the practice of brutish lusts must be inconsistent with it. And yet in fact we see that a great part of mankind are actuated by savage, wild, and extravagant passions.

HERE, I say, there arises a strange repugnance. Are the laws of virtue to be strictly enforced? no flesh could then be saved. Is an universal indulgence to be granted to disobedience? the laws of virtue might then as well have not been made at all.

REVEALED religion (for repentance is the peculiar doctrine of revelation)
provides

provides a remedy. It provides alike for the unerring purity of law, and the infirmity of man. The sinner is *always* at liberty to return to his duty, provided *he* really *turneth away from his wickedness, and actually doeth that which is lawful and right*: he then, according to the mild terms of revealed knowledge, answers in a great measure the purposes of his creation. The deist presumptuously imagines indeed, that his reason tells him as much. I shall not dispute it with him. But I had rather have *one* express promise to the purpose, from the God, to whom I am accountable; than ten thousand plausible conjectures; and farther no human reason carries any creature. A deep sense of having offended a worthy friend is not the affection I owed him; a sense of having violated the laws of one's country, is not justice; nor is a course of physick real health.

REPENTANCE is not innocence;
but,

but, as a means of leading erring creatures back to original obedience, it is a comfortable privilege—It is to be embraced with joy — It is a call of criminals from a state of condemnation — it is a restoration from sickness to health, from death to life, from misery to everlasting happiness. To neglect it is to neglect the necessary instrument of our salvation.

I. As religion has been one and the same under all dispensations, with some slight variety of forms; I shall just show, how this duty stood under the Mosaic æconomy; and then, as our principal concern lies with the gospel, I shall show more at large, how it stands now with us under the superior advantages of christian light and knowledge.

It requires no proof, that circumcision was the indispensable rite of admission into the privileges of the Jewish church;

church; and yet, from the very beginning, we see that the members of this church were taught to place the sole merit and efficacy of it in internal graces. Moses himself, the institutor of it, points out this moral tendency. CIRCUMCISE *therefore*, says he, *the foreskin of YOUR HEART and be no more STIFF-NECKED.* Deut. x. 16. *And the Lord thy God will CIRCUMCISE thine HEART, and the heart of thy seed, TO LOVE THE LORD thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul.* — xxx. 6.

THE prophets abound with precepts of this kind: *Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest my fury come forth like fire and burn; that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.* Jer. iv. 4.

WHAT circumcision began, the various forms of sacrifices were meant to perfect, by virtue of that one great sacrifice,

crifice, which alone gives merit to all human services. These sacrifices were required; though at the same time *it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.* Heb. x. 4. They were required; though at the same time it was declared, that *to obey was better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the blood of rams.* i. Sam. xv. 22. What was the purpose then of these institutions? It was to call all, who lived under the law, to repentance and perfection of manners, in reliance upon the merits of that future Redeemer, who (as we see explained at length in the Hebrews) is the Mediator of the covenant of grace to all good men of all generations.

UNDER the gospel, a clearer view of human corruption is opened: Jews and Gentiles fell short of the glory of God: all preceding institutions were but types and shadows of this better œconomy, and of course gave place, upon its appearance.

pearance. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.* Acts ii. 38; these were the terms, upon which this mercy was proposed to a sinful world. But then, as soon as this first step was taken, and awakened sinners became actual members of the christian church, then the apostles' exhortations took a different tone; they insisted upon the danger of a relapse, and the necessity of a regenerate life. *What shall we say then?* (asks the apostle, in order to state the true doctrine) *shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* God forbid! (answers he, with proper detestation of the wicked supposition) *God forbid! how shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?* Know ye not, that so many of us, as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory

glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Rom. vii. 1, &c.

IN the gospel view of things, therefore, the professed christian is supposed, at his baptism, to have taken upon him new purposes, new dispositions, and a new nature; to cease as much from sin, as a dead body ceases from all vital operations, *to be dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness.* It is this practice of virtue, under the motives and instrumental duties of the gospel, that forms the true christian: whereas a man, who still walks after the flesh and leads an unrighteous life, though he outwardly wears the name of Christ, and lives in the communion of his visible church, yet is as much a heathen, as much a stranger to Christ and an alien from the covenant of grace, as the professed heathen, who never heard the glad tidings of a Redeemer; and he has greater guilt too, for abusing so great a mercy,

mercy, the gracious means of his recovery.

BUT as under the gospel we are still frail and weak creatures, liable to frequent errors and infirmities; as the laver of regeneration, though it *takes away the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*, yet does not divest us of our passions; the case of the christian would still be hard, if he were precluded from the hopes of future indulgence, and tied up to the rigid terms of a sinless obedience.

THE gospel lays us under no such difficulties. Here another privilege, which may be called a second sort of repentance, comes in to our relief. For when the christian comes to years of discretion, and is able to judge of those principles, which the excellent institution of infant baptism obliged the guardians of his childhood to form his growing mind with, he is then called upon, in the office of confirmation, to

N

consider

consider the end and purpose of his creation. Prepared before, by a pious course of education, he knows this end to be the salvation of his better nature. He enters into life, with this purpose full in view. Sensible of his own weakness, and of the great multitude of worldly temptations, he walks on with caution; he has a guard upon his actions; he reviews his conduct, and calls his ways frequently to remembrance. Where he falls, he rises again and forms better resolutions.

IN short, by calling in the moral aids of reflection, and the spiritual aids of religion, he is ever endeavouring to make higher and higher proficiency in the proper business of a reasonable creature. The God of all mercy and goodness looks down, with approbation, upon his well-meant generous efforts, and, in his ordinances, seals his pardon, assists his weakness, and gives him comfort and confidence in his state.

SUCH

SUCH are the privileges, which the gospel gives us under the idea of repentance. The first, you see, is but an *introductory* duty, calculated only, by the forgiveness of former sins, to lay men under new obligations of living virtuous and holy lives. The second is a certain modest sense of our own weakness, ever inclining us to co-operate with the various means of grace, given us by our Maker, to remove and assist the defects of nature.

IT is possible indeed, that there may be people, even in a christian country, who live in a total ignorance of the Gospel Pretensions, who have grown up in the practice of gross corruptions without any opportunity of knowing better, or attending to the calls and motives of repentance. But this case resolves itself into the two foregoing principles. While they live these immoral lives, they are but mere heathens; and, when they happen to see their

danger and repent with proper sincerity, they are then, just what the heathens and Jews of old were upon their first admission into the church; they have just begun to be christians, and no more. If they live long enough to bring forth the proper fruits of repentance; they are then advanced some degrees in the christian life, and in the next state (where the degrees of glory and happiness are various) they will be rewarded just in proportion to their growth in grace.

THE Gospel knows no other preparative or qualification for eternal happiness, but innocence of manners. *Every one, that nameth the name of Christ, must depart from iniquity*, ii. Tim. ii. 19. i. e. he cannot otherwise be a real living member of the christian church here on earth.* And *without holiness*

no

* THERE is a seeming contradiction in all discourses upon this subject. A few words, though they cannot
put

no one shall see the Lord. Heb. xii. 14.
i. e. no one can be a partaker of the
church triumphant in a better state.

WE

put the doctrine beyond the possibility of cavil, yet will serve to render it sufficiently clear to every reader of common understanding and candour.

ALL men must be considered as being in some one of these three states, in a *capacity* of virtue; in the *actual practice* of it; or in a state of *reward*. This obliges us to distinguish the general word church into three kinds, the church *visible*, *invisible*, and *triumphant*. The visible furnishes men with the *necessary means* of grace, as *free* creatures; the invisible is the dispersed multitude of good men, that use the means of grace *properly*, in different communions, a body, visible only to the searcher of hearts; the triumphant consists of good men in a *future* state of happiness.

THERE is no dispute about the two last senses: but what errors have there been about the first! what clamours, what reproaches! Barclay (in his Apology, 8vo. p. 276) tells us, “that it belongs to the followers of the Devil to affirm, that men, who have this outward profession, though inwardly unholy, may be members of the true church of Christ.” Enthusiasts in all ages and countries have talked in the same strain; and Bp. Hoadley amongst ourselves, to serve a favourite turn, has proceeded upon the same confusion of ideas.

THAT there is, and must be, an outward church,

WE read indeed, that *there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that*

consisting of free creatures making different uses of the means of grace, is as certain as that there is a sun, which shines upon the thankful and unthankful alike.

TAKE a few authorities: *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* Acts, ii. 47. What is the church here? It is that multitude, which are said v. 44. to *have believed*. Well then: we read chap. iv. v. 4. of a similar addition. *Many of them which heard the word, believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand.* Were not these likewise, by parity of reason, added to the church? We read of no other conversions; and yet, we find in the very next chapter two false members, of this very body called the church; I mean, Ananias and Sapphira.

THE believers at Corinth had divisions and other immoralities among them; and yet St. Paul calls this body *the church*. i. Cor. i. 2.

NICOLAS was chosen one of the seven first deacons, *men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.* Acts, vi. 3. Yet he proved a heretic as we find, Rev. ii. 6. St. Paul calls Demas *his fellow labourer*, Philem. xxiv, yet this man proved a false member of the church. ii. Tim. iv. 10. Our Saviour compares the kingdom of heaven unto *a net which gathereth of every kind*, and unto *a field, where tares grow up among the good seed.*

that need no repentance. Luke xv. 7.
But this, we must observe, was spoken
in the beginning of the Gospel to invite
men

seed. Mat. xiii. The man must be blind, who cannot see
here the idea of a church, as consisting of members
making different uses of the means.

AGAIN, if we attend to the nature of the thing, we
find a necessity of adopting this idea. As long as we
are free, we must be capable of falling. And as long
as we are capable of falling, some moral discipline is
necessary. Now there is not a religious denomination in
the world, which considers not *outward profession* at least,
as a necessary or useful means of this kind. I ask then,
is there a body of men in the world, capable of hinder-
ing *hypocrites* from mingling with them? They must
have the gift of omniscience to know the human heart,
they must have the gift of omnipotence to controul the
waywardness of human will, before they can pretend to
such a privilege; and they must have matchless impudence,
to claim what the world knows to be an impossibility.

LASTLY I would observe, that this idea of a church
is best accommodated to the wants of human nature.
Every church, indeed, should have a power of ex-
cluding open notorious ill livers out of its communion,
and exercise it also in such a manner as best answers the
purposes of general edification. But as for others, it is
best for weak frail creatures to have the means of grace
free and open; as truth by this method has a chance of
finding them, in some happy hour or other, in a proper

men into its terms, not to supersede them. Open as the gate of mercy ever lies to a reformed sinner, yet he never can be as highly rewarded, as one, who has uniformly proceeded in a virtuous course; until he has as virtuous dispositions, and as many good actions, to support his claim. We read too, in the parable, that the returning prodigal,

disposition to receive it. Thus the weak and frail are treated as *moral agents*, capable of virtue; and the better sort are encouraged and strengthened in the *progress* of virtue.

THIS then removes the seeming contradiction mentioned above: a man may be, and may not be, at the same time, a member of Christ's church. The immoral hypocrite is and must be a member of the visible church; he has a right to the means of grace; he may some time or other see his error and repent. But unless he reforms, and leads a life agreeable to the moral precepts of the gospel; he will not be acknowledged by Christ as a true disciple either here or hereafter, as a member either of the invisible or triumphant church.

SEE Dr. Rogers' *visible and invisible church*, and his defence of it against Dr. Sykes. It is a pity his dispersed observations were not collected into a regular treatise.

gal, received stronger and more sensible demonstrations of the father's love, than the elder brother ever did in a long course of obedience. True: but this put him not upon a level with his brother; it deprived not the latter of his better claims. "I want (cries the fond but discreet father) only to indulge a parent's joy, over a recovered child — recovered from destruction—recovered,—when dark despair gave him over as lost. Hence this gush of tears: they spring not from partiality: they are the sweet overflowings of a tender heart, convulsed by unhop'd for rapture, but embracing you both alike. *For all that I have is thine*: thy inheritance is not lessened: his future good behaviour must work out his own portion: And it is meet that thou should'st rejoice with me upon so happy, so delightful an event."—

IN short, to repeat what cannot be inculcated

inculcated too often, happiness under the Gospel, as it must in all true religion, depends upon the morality of our lives. Let the sinner repent when he pleases, he must be wholly changed, assume a virtuous bent of disposition, before he can be a christian, and his future reward will be in exact proportion to the degrees of his proficiency.

II. WHAT now, shall we think of the various contrivances, invented by corrupt men, to defeat the salutary purpose and design of repentance?

SOME, you see, live with much complacency in vicious habits, under the false comfort of an outward superficial communion: exact in the ceremonial of religion, they join the church in her confessions, and the world in all its favourite pollutions. — Some comfort themselves with the transient regret and compunction of serious intervals: temptation returns; they use no care to
avoid

avoid it; appetite revives; and they relapse into the sins they deplored before. — Others intend not to repent, until they are fairly tired and satiated with their sins: they consider God as a good-natured sort of being, whom they can satisfy when they please: they think that their appetites will cloy, passions exhaust themselves, and that repentance, and ceasing from sin under a debility of nature while the heart is still unregenerate, are the same thing. And thus, in the mean time, they sin on securely, sufficiently satisfied with the distant prospect of this mistaken sort of repentance.

BUT if we attend only to the simplest first notions of truth, it would be impossible for men of the commonest understanding to entertain such crude imperfect conceptions of human duty.

ONE of the first ideas, which we conceive of God, is, that of a MORAL GOVERNOR. It is confessed then that
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he has, in his revealed will, offered terms of acceptance to a sinful world.

LET us now apply some of our commonest notions of order. When a prince publishes terms of mercy to rebel subjects; do we consider this as an approbation of their disobedience, and not rather as a means of recalling them to their duty and allegiance? When a father forgives an offending child, does he mean by his indulgence to encourage him in his fault, and not rather to win him over, by the ties of gratitude, as well as duty, to better behaviour? What is the reason we can judge aright in these common cases, and yet put the grossest constructions upon the indulgence of Divine forgiveness?—Why, our judgments are warped by our corruptions; otherwise, we must see, that God means only by his mercy to call us back to our original duty of subjection to his laws.

MORAL

MORAL laws were appointed by him in his first creation and constitution of things. What a being of unerring wisdom appoints, he appoints *as the best*: and what he appoints *as the best*, he can no more alter, than he can alter his own nature. To change belongs to creatures liable to error and misapprehension.

THE Deity indeed may in some respects vary his measures, according to the irregularity of free will; but his main design must ever be the same: his particular deviations and indulgencies must have this in view, and will be used no farther than they serve to promote it. Thus the privilege of repentance, and the assistances of grace are supernatural indulgences. But they are adapted only to the fallen state of man; they cannot be meant to supersede the original duty of virtuous obedience. A discreet parent, (to resume my former instance,) may try the different expedients

ents of threats, promises, kindness, and severity, upon a child of unhappy dispositions; yet, as a discreet parent, his object must ever be the same, the rendering of his child an useful man: if he succeeds not, he can only deplore the ill success of his kind endeavours; he cannot forcibly impress the virtues necessary to the purpose.

WE may unhappily find hereafter, if we cannot believe it now, that God may be, in the same manner, under a necessity of leaving those creatures to the bitter consequences of their own vices, whom his present discipline could not reclaim to virtue.

IF we look around us, we find, throughout the vegetable and animal kingdoms, one uniform appointment, that reads a silent lecture to mankind. It is this; that we must seek our happiness in that, which is the peculiar privilege and characteristic of our nature. Almost every species, amidst the
numerous

numerous tribes of plants and animals, has a peculiar aptness and disposition for particular elements, soils, and foods. They subsist no longer, than they find things adapted to this peculiar organization. Remove a plant from those juices, and those degrees of heat and cold, which nature rendered necessary to it; and it languishes and dies away: deprive an animal of the nourishment suited to its particular organs, and death is the certain consequence. No artificial means can supersede the capital essential defect.

MAN, to be sure, by means of his animal nature, is capable of relishing bodily pleasures, of enjoying a mere sensual life. But, as he has a moral and intellectual nature, as he is designed for a spiritual life hereafter; is he not taught, by these natural intimations, to prepare himself for this higher enjoyment, by suitable virtuous dispositions?

WE

WE have great reason to believe, that it is the established rule of Divine government, that we must, in some measure, render ourselves meet to be partakers of glory, before we can have any lot or inheritance there. Without a capacity, there can be no pleasurable perception. The life of a brute cannot form an angel. A worm can receive no accession of happiness from the splendor of a court; a fool has no conceptions of the pleasures of knowledge; a vicious man has no relish in serious and virtuous exercises.

It is in our power to acquire such habits now, as will prepare us for a purer happiness. Let virtue, and reason guide our animal desires; and they cannot obstruct this great end. Slight imperfections may occasionally interrupt, but will never finally destroy, our happier tendency. The grace of God will supply the rest. But let us not suppose (for he gives us not the least countenance)

nance) that he can alter the nature and constitution of things : if we seek true happiness, we must seek it in the way he has appointed us.

WE might confirm our faith too, if we but reflected a little upon our nature in another view. There is something in virtue so congenial, if I may so express myself, with the nature of man ; that the mind is never perfectly at ease, but when it has innocence to support it. Worldly comforts may amuse, beguile, and please for a time ; but they afford no solid and permanent satisfaction, where the last idea of guilt is connected with the memory of them. This gives a pain which no earthly consolations can alleviate ; while virtue gives a tranquillity, which no earthly evils can destroy. And what is this, but an audible lesson, to all those who will hear its voice, that man is in a state, which requires a virtuous, sober, and righteous life ?

III. FROM what has been said, we learn several useful lessons to rectify our notions, and direct our practice.

WE see repentance is not a duty which we have a natural right to exercise at any time or in any manner we think proper—It is the mercy of GOD through Jesus Christ, which we must embrace at his time and according to his appointment. And if we had as great regard to our spiritual as to our bodily health, (and the former is certainly of much greater consequence*) we should embrace the first opportunity of applying the means of our recovery.

NOR is it necessary (as some deluded men pretend to tell us) to assign the exact *place* and *time* of our conversion; nor are those outward expressions, sorrow, mourning, and tears, necessary
parts

* —————nam cur,
Quæ lædunt oculum, festinas demere, siquid
Est animum, differs curandi tempus in annum?

HOR.

parts of true repentance. These outward expressions depend a good deal upon the bodily frame and constitution. The surest marks of christian repentance is ceasing to do evil and learning to do well, under a sense of the Divine authority. The beginning may be and often is sensible, arising from some awakening incident, some sudden misfortune, some disorder, some grave discourse, or serious vein of reflection.

BUT the progress is slow and gradual. And of this the following is a sure criterion. If a man seriously attends to his life, corrects his errors, repairs his injuries, and uses the means of grace, PRIVATE DEVOTION and ATTENDANCE UPON DIVINE ORDINANCES, and, under these means, endeavours to make an actual progress in a virtuous life, he is a *true penitent*; and though he neither afflicts, nor bewails, nor torments himself in weak timid complaints, yet if the seed *springs and grows up* impercep-

tibly in his heart *he knoweth not how*, Mark iv. 27, he wants no assurances of his being in the Divine favour from self-appointed ministers, whom GOD NEVER SENT.

AND, though we must labour after perfection in this life, yet let no man arrogate to himself, the proud pharisee's claim, a pure and unfinning perfection. To be sure, St. John saith, *whosoever is born of God doth* NOT COMMIT SIN. i. John iii. 9. But he also tells us, *that if we say we HAVE NO SIN, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* — i. 8. And the solution is this: *to commit sin*, in the language of scripture, is to live in some habit of sin, or to fall into some gross crime; and this to be sure can be said of no one deserving the name of Christ; but slight errors and miscarriages we are liable to, as long as we carry flesh and blood about us, and so long the blood of Christ and the grace of his ordinances is necessary to a true christian life.

BUT

BUT let us, at the same time, avoid the gross error of those, who place a merit in church ordinances, independent of the inward grace and moral disposition. These men, the members of the true Catholic church as they call themselves, deluded with a vain idle circle of confessions and absolutions, are,* as one well expresses it, “ ever penitents without ever repenting, “ and continually doing penance, without ever amending their lives and “ manners at all.” We have not so learned Christ : we use certain outward means, because they are of his appointment ; we attend to the spiritual uses and purposes of them, because shadows without the substance are vain.

BUT what shall we say to those besotted men, who disclaim both the means and spirit of religion ?

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* Dr. Clarke.

IN their lives they are heathens, and hereafter will not have heathen ignorance to plead in their excuse. For what man wants opportunities of knowing the way of life?—The voice of natural conscience in every bosom, the example and conversation of good men in every part of life, the public shame attending flagitious actions, the public praise bestowed on virtue, in which the wicked are even forced to bear a part—all these are calls, which no one can overlook: the churches of God are open, and his ministers are calling men every day to a reformation of manners. And if men, under these advantages, will stop their ears and turn their backs upon instruction; their ignorance is self-sought, and, so far from being an excuse, will make part of their guilt, as an abuse of one of the greatest mercies of Divine Providence.

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SERMON IX.

The Necessity of an immediate Repentance.

SERMON IX



HAPPY is the man, who, under
the influence of a good education
and virtuous disposition, has pursued a
regular course of life, from the first
years of childhood, through the first
way, wherein he finds work, he finds
his duty connected into a system, he
goes on uniformly in a course of good-

S E R M O N IX.

EZEK. xviii. 27.—

WHEN THE WICKED MAN TURNETH AWAY FROM HIS WICKEDNESS THAT HE HATH COMMITTED, AND DOETH THAT WHICH IS LAWFUL AND RIGHT, HE SHALL SAVE HIS SOUL ALIVE.

HAPPY is the man, who, under the influence of a good education and virtuous dispositions, has pursued a regular course of life, from the first years of discretion ! Trained up in the way, wherein he should walk, he finds his duty converted into a pleasure : he goes on uniformly in a course of goodness ;

ness; betrayed indeed, by the common weakness of nature, into *occasional* frailties and errors, yet never *habitually* deserting his Maker's service. His passions are under discipline: habits of reflection, and the grace of God in the regular revolution of religious offices, either restrain or recall them to their proper subjection. The world has the benefit of his virtues, and he the comforts and serenity of a mind at ease.

BUT, unhappily, a great part of mankind, on their first entrance into life, take a contrary course. They grow up uninstructed and undisciplined: the passions swell: the pulse beats high: the world spreads all its bewitching charms to seduce them. The example of those before them adds force to these solicitations. — The contest is soon decided, where the forces are disproportioned. — Where principles are either weak or none at all, passions will ever get the ascendant. Under their blind impulse,

pulse, then, the weak and simple are hurried away; down they go the broad, and smooth, and easy path of sin, that leadeth to destruction.*

WHAT are the ministers of religion to say and do in this deplorable case? Are they to shut up the gate of mercy against this unhappy, this pitiable part of their fellow-creatures? That were cruelty. Are they to set them upon a level with the uniformly virtuous and useful? That were to subvert the foundations of right and wrong.

THE truth is, repentance, when *real* and *sincere*, is always acceptable to God in its proper degree, and, through the merits of a Mediator, washes away the
guilt

* ——— facilis descensus Averni;

Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis:

Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,

Hoc opus, hic labor est: *pauci*, quos æquus amavit

Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad æthera virtus,

Dis geniti, potuere ———

VIRG. 6. 126.

guilt of all transgressions ; but to indulge and practise sin with the hopes of exercising such a sincere and true repentance, as is *really acceptable*, is a delusion of the most fatal consequence to mankind. For this notion supposes that a man has a command of things, which lie totally out of his own power ; that he can ascertain his life, and the degrees of mischief, which his vices occasion ; that he can command his resolutions ; and claim the assistance of Divine grace when he pleases. All these are wild suppositions. For life is uncertain—the mischievous consequences of several vices hard to be repaired—human resolutions grow every day weaker by ill habits—and Divine grace can only co-operate with, and not force, our wills.

I. BOAST *not thyself of the morrow,*
(says the wise man) *for thou knowest not*
what the morrow shall bring forth. Yet
the sinner, as if times and seasons and
accidents

accidents were under his controul, thinks and talks deliberately of repenting hereafter—in some distant period—*when* he knows not, and is not yet at leisure to determine—at some unassignable time, when he has more leisure and inclination—and in the mean while sits down with much comfort and composure in the indulgence of his favourite sins. — Unhappy man! — how can you put this palpable cheat upon yourself? — Nothing is more uncertain than human life. It is a bubble liable to be broken by the slightest breath. Death lurks in our very frame: the very air we breathe, the food we take in for our support, carry along with them the seeds of our dissolution. A thousand dangers surround us: the least of them is sufficient to destroy us: the Providence of him, whom you are affronting by your delays, is the cause of your safety and preservation. Let him withdraw his
 influ-

influence; and instantly every vital motion stops, and your life and purposes are gone together: the smallest insect, the slightest stroke of things about you, is sufficient to bring about this fatal event. *In the midst of life we are in death*; health itself in excess is often our destruction. Look around you, and tell me, what it is you place your confidence upon? Youth is no security; for the young and old die alike: power is no protection; for death arrests the monarch amidst his guards: greatness is no defence; for it visits alike the cottage and palace. You eat to support life, — that often terminates in a surfeit. You labour in your daily business — This often overheats you, and a fiery fever ensues. Sleep tends to recruit nature — but how many close their eyes in this world and open them in another! —

WE are sailing on a tempestuous sea, in a frail bottom; we see thousands
foun-

foundering unexpectedly around us, of all states, conditions and ages. If we cannot see, that we are equally in danger, we are blind beyond expression.

II. BUT, though we could ascertain the term of our lives, yet it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to know the extent of the mischief occasioned by our sins.

Now it is an acknowledged truth, that no repentance is complete without restitution. To repent supposes that we wish the act undone, and we can never wish this sincerely, without endeavouring to repair all its fatal consequences. Such offences indeed as relate only to God, are sufficiently rectified by sincere contrition and amendment. But these are few in comparison of the number, which affect the peace and innocence of the world about us. It is not the mere transient act, that constitutes an injury : they are the fatal consequences, which the action has upon your neighbour,
that

that constitute its malignity; and, as long as the consequences continue unrepaired, the injury continues, and your repentance, whatever sorrow or pain you feel upon the recollection of the act, is still defective.

THIS again being an acknowledged truth, let us examine a few vicious characters, and see whether the act of reparation be so easy a thing as the sinner thinks; if he can be said indeed to think upon a subject, which he never seriously weighed in his whole life.

SUPPOSE a man, who is not guilty of any vice of immediate ill influence on the world; let him be honest and fair in his dealings, a peaceable neighbour, a kind friend, an affectionate relation; suppose at the same time, (if it be possible) that such a man should openly neglect or ridicule the institutions of religion, or even encourage his weaker brethren by his example to think lightly of them. Even this is an offence,
which

which cannot be repaired without much recollection and difficulty. Does this man know the number of those, whom he has perverted, whose principles he has corrupted, whose passions he has inflamed, and set loose from the restraints of religion?

TAKE again a man, who, in the foolish language of the world, is *no body's enemy but his own*, the drunkard, I mean; whose vice is supposed to terminate in himself; and let us see what consequences he has to rectify, in order to complete his repentance. Has he no friends or neighbours, who have a right to his *unimpaired* faculties? Has he no children or wife, that must be turned out to beg the bread of vagrant idleness, or encrease the burden, which the legal provision brings upon the industrious? Has he no companions in his riots, whom his persuasion or example encourages?—Have

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his passions, inflamed by liquor, never broke out into any excesses, never abused his friend, revealed his secrets, or blackened his reputation? Have none of the partakers of his tumultuous scenes been transported, in the heat of them, into any such excesses? Let the drunkard endeavour in some sober hour to answer these questions, and he will find a full reparation, a task already sworn perhaps beyond his power.

IMAGINE again the libertine, who makes it his business to corrupt female virtue. To win the confidence of a person by overtures of affection, to engage the partiality of a fond tender heart, to hold out the fairest pretensions of unabated passion, and lasting fidelity, and then, in some fatal moment of unsuspicious fondness and innocent credulity, to take advantage of sleeping virtue — and then — base assassin! — to cast her away, lost to fame, lost to the world,

world, to her friends, and to herself—to be hissed at and marked out with abhorrence—to be deprived of an honest and comfortable settlement in the world—nay, of common refuge and protection—obliged to end her days in poverty, irreclaimable prostitution, or an untimely impenitent death—dreadful evils, horrid even in conception!—this is the crime of the libertine, which he calls gallantry, and the following of nature; but what reason must call in most cases an inexpiable crime, beyond the reach of reparation, that important, that essential part of repentance.

BUT if we proceed from hence to the more acknowledged characters of active vice, the unjust servant, the fraudulent dealer, the secret thief or powerful oppressor, whose plan of life is to thrive and live by injustice; here frauds and villanies appear, exceeding even the power of memory to recollect.

IF therefore (that we may conclude

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this head) reparation and restitution be an essential part of true repentance, where our sins affect social life ; if most of our sins have either directly or indirectly such a pernicious influence ; and if, in a long progress, they accumulate and swell into guilt beyond the reach of reparation, and even recollection ; it becomes every man, who has any serious intention of saving himself, to stop immediately, before he brings himself into such inextricable difficulties, as he will wish for worlds to be clear of, and yet must wish in vain.

III. BUT this forms not the worst part of a sinner's distress. His moral powers grow every day weaker by sinful habits.

SIN tends to render the heart callous and insensible to every good impression. It darkens the judgment, perverts the affections, enslaves the will. It wears away the natural restraints of
fear

fear and shame; it blots out of the mind the distinctions of right and wrong; the imagination is stained and polluted with vicious ideas, the passions are inflamed by a habit of commanding, and the reason rendered base and servile from a habit of obedience. Evil habits, by these means, insensibly take a firm hold of man; one act brings on another, repetition renders the act familiar, familiarity begets a confirmed habit, and habit grows into a second nature. *The leopard*, in the language of scripture, *can as soon change his spots*, as an inveterate sinner, except in extraordinary cases, change and alter the bent of a depraved disposition. Like wounds in the body, unless timely prevented, sin festers, corrupts, and mortifies by degrees, and diffuses its malignity over all the powers of the soul.

AT the same time, that our moral powers are decaying, temptations continue the same: the world will to mor-

row present the same riches, the same pleasures, and honours to ensnare us, as it does to day. Though the temptations of youth decrease, the temptations of manhood and age continue. Though appetites subside and cool by time, the inclination may still survive; the wishes of a corrupt heart may still increase the guilt amidst the impotence of sinking nature. For as refraining from sin through mere fear is not genuine virtue, so ceasing from sin from want of ability or opportunity is not repentance.

A MAN will never repent, if he means to wait, till there be no temptations. While he amuses himself with one idle hope after another of certain better opportunities hereafter; life wears away, and the man is but just where he was before. To morrow he will repent, and, in the mean time thinks, he may safely sin to day: to morrow comes, and he sins again. To morrow he will be more resolute, and

and certainly amend. That day also comes, and finds him as much unresolved and unprepared. Trained on thus by a succession of delusions, he is in his first state perpetually resolving, and perpetually finning, until at last habit rivets on its chains, and death comes like an armed man, and seizes him unprepared.

GOOD GOD ! what a wretched creature is an habitual finner ! What can be conceived more melancholy, than such a sight—a reasonable creature, designed for the fellowship of angels, without one taste or relish but for the clog of matter he carries about him in common with the beasts of the field ! Attempting to leave his sins, but drawn by a sort of necessity to commit what he abhors ? Attempting to make his peace with GOD, but incapable of one feeling or sentiment towards him, but the mere fear of his vengeance ! Burning in a fever, or stupified with pains,

which deprive him of all memory, all reflection, and all his reason! and going to meet that Being, to whom he owed the service of his whole life, in this unprepared corrupted state!

THIS is the tendency of all sin: to prevent it our resolution should be immediate. Begin in youth, and the way of virtue becomes smooth, easy, and delightful. The impetuous impulse of passion may now and then drive you out of your course: yet reflection and Divine grace, which never deserts the well-disposed, will bring you again into the right track. Or, if you have been so unhappy as to have fallen into any bad habits, consider, that you have lost too much time already, your danger is encreasing; you may serve the powers of repentance, and sin on till death conveys you unprepared before your Judge.

IV.

IV. BUT if the sinner will still persuade himself, in spite of reason and experience which are so much against him, that he is sufficiently sure of his moral powers; there is a further thing to be considered by him: the necessity of Divine grace in the work of repentance and regeneration.

IT were happy for the world, if, according to the doctrine which is revived of late,* and spreads with the usual contagion

* ONE of the strongest texts of scripture, urged for the doctrine of *irresistible grace* is that of St. John. *Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit.* John, iii. 5—8.

1. To be born of water is a Jewish phrase, denoting baptism by water, as Mr. Selden and Dr. Lightfoot, two of the greatest masters of Jewish learning, acquaint us.

contagion of enthusiasm, among the ignorant and illiterate, the grace of God did act in strong and irresistible impulses on the human mind.

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us. See Dr. Hammond and Whitby on the place. The antient commentators, as Dr. Lightfoot also informs us, universally understood the present passage in this sense. The first person, who understood it otherwise, was Calvin, and he has been since followed by such reformers, as knew not, how to destroy the extravagant pretensions of the church of Rome, without subverting all church discipline and order at the same time. It is only to be lamented, that the excellent Grotius, though he acknowledges an *allusion* in the words to the institution of baptism, yet should lend his authority to the new fangled unnatural interpretation.

I SHALL content myself at present with saying, that what he alledges in support of it, really makes against it. He says, it is an Hendyadis, like Mat. iii. 11. But as that expression, *he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire*, signifies, he shall baptize you with the spirit under the *appearance* of fire, Acts, ii. 3. So, by parity of reason, *being born of water and the spirit*, may at least imply an operation of the spirit by the element of water, as an instrument or visible sign of conveyance. He says further, that the *spirit* is represented under the metaphor of *water* in scripture. It is so, John, vii. 37. But we must observe, that our Saviour

WERE the case so, he, *who willetb not the death of any sinner*, would certainly make us universally virtuous and happy

viour in all his parables, where he meant to be understood by his hearers, borrowed the metaphor from some obvious fact or immediate occurrence that led them to the secret sense. It was so here. It was the custom upon the day here mentioned to fetch water from Siloam as a drink-offering to God; and this furnished him with the happiest of allusions. But there is nothing to give water a figurative sense in the above place.—There are many positive arguments in favour of the ancient interpretation, if this were a proper place for them. But it is a sufficient defence of an established opinion, to refute the objections against it.

2. THE similitude of wind has not the least reference to the *force*, with which this agent operates.

FOR what purpose, pray, was the similitude introduced by our Saviour? It was to clear up some point, which surprized Nicodemus. And what was that?—our Saviour himself tells us, *marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again*. It was not Nicodemus's doubt whether the spirit acted in an *irresistible* manner or *not* in this renovation: his doubt was, whether there were any *spiritual change at all*.

NICODEMUS, used to the outward pomp of Jewish ceremonies, could not raise his mind to the apprehension of this sublime doctrine. The simile is adapted to his

happy in every stage of our existence. But such is not the constitution of Divine wisdom. Grace only co-operates with

his weakness. "As the wind is in itself *invisible* (no " *one seeing whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*) and yet " produces *sensible* and great effects, so a spiritual principle (though invisible) may produce sensible effects " in the moral world." The simile illustrates the reality of the principle not the manner of its operation.

3. BUT if *being born of water* was a Jewish phrase, denoting baptism, how could Nicodemus *marvel*? Our Saviour shall answer this too: *Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not THESE THINGS?* i. e. " my " doctrine, as I said before, is this: A true disciple must become a new creature; he must be " admitted into the covenant of grace by baptism, renouncing his former sins, prejudices, and all worldly lusts, and live agreeably to the conditions of this " covenant under the conduct of the Holy Spirit. And " do you, a Jewish doctor, wonder at THESE THINGS? " Have you not TWO THINGS, which ought to lead " you into my meaning? Do you not yourselves make " proselytes by washing them with water, and count " them *new-born* persons? — And have you not prophets, who have foretold, that God will plentifully " communicate the spirit in the days of the Messiah for " the instruction and improvement of mankind."

with human will : it strengthens, enlightens, and improves, but does not over-rule, our powers.

THE doctrine of grace, as I take it, is a mystery : but we may as well doubt of the usefulness of light and heat in the animal world, as of the reality of spiritual influences in the moral. The great difficulty is, to reconcile the operations of grace with the freedom of will, a principle, universally acknowledged essential to moral agency. Pray, tell me, you ! that think this difficulty a sufficient reason for rejecting the scripture account of grace, how do you reconcile the spontaneity of your animal functions with the invigorating influences of heat and light ? You feel yourself, to be sure, master of your own bodily actions ; you really walk, and move, at your full liberty. And yet, when your members are grown unfit to retain, assimilate, and exert the vital heat, death is the inevitable conse-

consequence ; when your organ of sight is gone, the common luminary shines upon you in vain ; you are blind, and dead, and senseless amidst the general comfort of things around you.

Now I desire no greater degree of faith from you with regard to grace. *If any man, says the scripture, have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Rom. viii. 7. This spirit is in the moral, what the son is in the natural world : it is the fountain of intellectual light and heat : our faculties live and move and act in its influence : from it *all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed.* It leaves us free, but is necessary to our spiritual life. Beware then, lest, as the sun cherishes *only* those creatures, whose organs are adapted to receive his friendly impulses, you may become so *blind and dead in trespasses and sins*, that the grace of God itself cannot operate upon you, and
awake

awake one generous sentiment in that inanimate bosom of yours.

THE grace of GOD requires the co-operation of man in the various instrumental aids of moral discipline. It is the universal language of scripture, which authorizes us to represent the spirit under the similitude of fire. *Quench not the spirit.* i. Thes. v. 19. *Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.* ii. Tim. i. 6. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you to will and do of his good pleasure.* Phil. ii. 13, 14. These texts (and many more might be adduced) plainly point out the spirit as the principle of sanctification; and yet at the same time suppose that the application belongs to our freedom, else the precepts would be but empty sounds. They refer to the universal rule of GOD's proceeding in moral cases: *He, that bath,* i. e. he that really hath, or exerciseth what he hath, *to him shall be given; and*

and he, that hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that which he hath.
Mark iv. 25.

IT is difficult, uncharitable, and, for aught I know, blasphemy, for any mortal, amidst our present ignorance, to fix the precise limits of final obduracy. But we know enough from experience to believe the possibility of the fact.

LOOK at a debauchee in the decline of life—his hand shakes, his knees totter, his strength is almost gone — and yet that poor remaining strength—pitiable wretch !—serves only to carry him to the old scenes of his debauchery. The decay of constitution lessens not his corruption. Filthy thoughts have taken possession of his imagination. His soul has no relish for any thing rational, generous, and virtuous. He thinks of nothing, he talks of nothing, but of sensual things. He diabolically employs his reason, to stretch his passions beyond nature ; and then turning tutor
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in vice, he admires, applauds, and teaches those practices he can no longer enjoy.

OR look at a sinner, suddenly arrested, in his wicked career, by some unexpected illness. See him stretched upon his sick-bed, and you are amazed at the alteration in the man — You are tempted to think, that he is quite become a new creature—you hear prayers becoming the fervour of a saint; you hear the passionate protestations, the firm vows and resolves of a repenting Peter — Behold the effect: it pleases God to make one trial more of him—the disorder takes a favourable turn, health revives, his spirits rekindle, old objects present themselves again; and what is the consequence? — I leave you to judge from the small number, that prove real penitents upon their return into the world.

TAKE lastly an instance from some victim of public justice. This man has

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had

had an opportunity of conversing long with himself in the solitude of confinement : some friendly minister of religion has assisted his devotion : he prays, he beats his breast, he lifts up his eyes to heaven ; he thinks too that he repents. He encreases and multiplies these expressions of repentance, as he is led to the place of punishment. His pious demeanour raises even your compassion. You wish to see such a reformed man pardoned and restored to the community. Suppose him then given to your wishes, restored from death — instant death, acting upon him in its strongest impressions—and you will find him restored—“ only* that he may again take
“ up

* DEAN Swift has given us the most natural picture of abandoned life, in the last dying words of Ebenezer Elliston.

“ I CAN, (says he, in that man’s character,) I can
“ say farther from my own knowledge, that two of my
“ fraternity, after they had been hanged, and wonder-
“ fully

“ up his old trade again, his evil habits
 “ are so rooted in him, and he is grown
 “ so unfit for any other kind of employ-
 “ ment.”

I MEAN not to discourage the outward means and expressions of repentance : but certainly these representations, taken as you must know from real life, tend to show the danger of trifling with grace, the necessary instrument of salvation. It is ever ready, to be sure, to assist our endeavours. But we must remember that the spirit of God doth not always strive with man : those, whom it cannot reform, it leaves to the bias of their natural corruptions. There are certain states and dispositions of the

Q 2 heart;

“ fully came to life, and made their escapes, as it
 “ sometimes happens, proved afterwards the wickedest
 “ rogues I ever knew, and so continued until they were
 “ hanged again for good and all ; and yet they had the
 “ impudence at both times they went to the gallows,
 “ to smite their breasts, and lift up their eyes to heaven
 “ all the way.”

heart, inconsistent with its soft improving influences.

IT is often seen, indeed, to awaken even the thoughtless far-gone sinner in some particular serious seasons, under the judgments and visitations of God. Where this effect begins at the heart, where it is permanent, where it leads a man to the discipline of religion, and brings forth in him the meet fruits of repentance ; it is happy with him, he will be rewarded according to his proficiency in the spiritual life. But happier far is he, who from the very beginning of life forms and keeps up this acquaintance with the principle of holiness, in the regular use of the appointed methods and channels of its conveyance.

THUS, you see, the delaying of repentance proceeds upon four absurd suppositions. It supposes we have a command over our life, whereas nothing is more uncertain — it supposes we can
calculate

calculate and repair the mischief of our sins ; whereas this grows soon beyond the power of the deliberate sinner — it supposes, we have a command of our resolutions and Divine grace, whereas every day more and more weakens our resolutions, and unfits us for the influences both of preventing and assisting grace.

THE true meaning of all the sinner's excuses is plainly this, he wants *inclination* to repent. Only let him examine himself—why does he propose to repent *to-morrow*, rather than *to-day*?—It is (his conscience will honestly tell him) because he is not willing at present to *part with his sins*. Well then : since he plainly sees, that this *disinclination* must encrease upon him ; is it not his business to begin immediately ; as a moment lost may be his destruction ? Is it not the part of madness to defer a ne-

cessary work ?* Do we stand shivering upon the bank of a river, when death pursues us behind, and one bold plunge speeds us over, out of the reach of danger, to perfect safety ? If you expect the stream to run by, you are mistaken : the current of temptation† ever flows before you, to obstruct your passage. Away with those cowardly fears : one brave effort will break off your habits, and begin your salvation ; call in religious offices to your aid ; keep out of the way of such temptations, as have used to foil your resolution ; and you will find the work of salvation every day more and more perfected in you.

THE

* ECCE, fugæ medio fummis Amasenus abundans
Spumabat ripis ; tantus se nubibus imber
Ruperat : ille, innare parans, infantis amore
Tardatur, caroq; oneri timet—————

At Metabus, magnâ propiùs jam urgente catervâ,
Dat sese fluvio.——Virg. *Æn.* 11. 547, &c.

† RUSTICUS expectat, dum defluat amnis ; at ille
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis avum.

HOR. *Epis.* 1, 2, 42.

THE truth is, the real difficulties of religion are so very small, that I must consider deliberate finners as proceeding in general upon *unbelief*.

FOR what, in the name of God, is there of difficulty in true religion? Does it deny the craving appetites of hunger and thirst? No, the saint eats and drinks like other men; religion forbids only intemperance. Does it deny the social appetites? No, it forbids only vagrant lust, it consecrates chaste pleasures with its blessing. Does it deny a provision for ourselves and families? No, it allows, it commends, it enjoins honest industry as a virtue. Does it deny us the use of speech? It condemns only the shameless abuses of it. Does it deny the pleasures of recreation and amusement? No, in no case, but where they encroach upon the offices of useful life or endanger our virtue. Does it bring shame and dishonour upon its votaries?

Q4

No,

No, unaffected piety cannot want its due honour and veneration.

YES, religion allows every thing, that nature rationally can require. The libertine may freely *drink waters of his own cistern*, and find a truer happiness than he ever knew before ; the epicure may exchange his riot for the most exquisite luxury, the natural luxury of desires regulated and heightened by useful labour and sobriety ; the oppressor may grow safely and comfortably great by that virtuous industry, which maketh rich and bringeth no sorrow with it. And the case is the same in most other instances.

NAY, the change, one should think, is easy : nature points it out : the terrors of the Lord enforce it. *If ye live, says the scripture, after the flesh, ye shall die.* Rom. viii. 13. *Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit*

herit the kingdom of God. i. Cor. vi. 9, 10. The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Rev. xxi. 8. These words are daily read in our ears: finners hear them as well as others: they hear them without concern, and go on in their sins.

THE power of habit, great as it is, is not sufficient to account for this, especially in the first stages. Surely there must be something more at the bottom; finners must certainly think with themselves, that God never intends to deal with mankind as he has threatened; that a little cold phlegm, and caution, and reserve with regard to the good things of the world, and tasting them somewhat more freely and generously, cannot make so great a difference in human fate.

LET me seriously ask you—were you
going

going to commit some great wickedness in the highest eagerness of kindled desire, were you, for instance, upon the point of grasping some vast heap of wealth to which you had no right, and some accident should suddenly wrap the house in flames about your ears; would you not instantly fly for your life, leave your crime unperpetrated, and, in the senseless torpor of fear, forget at once your passion and the object of it? —Alas! every deliberate sinner is in this state: the judgments of God are ready to arrest him; the judgments of him, who knows the nature of sin better than we, and has mercifully warned us of a misery, which his goodness probably cannot avert.

IT is now in your power to escape this danger by an immediate repentance. Awake from your lethargy, and escape for your life. Say not with the stupid sluggard, *a little more sleep, a little more slumber,*

slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep: eternity depends upon your present virtue. Life is ebbing fast, the day of visitation is drawing on; a thousand dangers surround you, every one of which is sufficient to precipitate it. If a course of virtue were not necessary to your happiness, he, you may be sure, who willeth not the death of any creature, would have given you happiness upon easier terms; he, who solicited you so long with his grace in vain, will be obliged to reject you in these words, that at once declare and fix your fate — Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. Prov. i. 24, 25, 26.

God give us all grace, in this our day, so to work out our salvation, that we may be prepared whenever he is pleased

pleased to call for us! With a mind thus fully at peace with him, how safely can we face the temptations of the busy day, and how securely repose ourselves amidst the perils and dangers of the night! How happily are we armed against all emergencies! Cut off soon in this virtuous course, we are but transplanted so much the sooner to a happier world; if the time of trial continues longer, and patience has a longer exercise; a greater reward, a brighter crown of glory is ready to recompense our encreasing virtue.

28 SE60

SER-

S E R M O N X.

Of Faith.



S E R M O N X.

ii. COR. iv. 18.✓

THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN ARE
TEMPORAL; BUT THE THINGS
WHICH ARE NOT SEEN, ARE ETER-
NAL.

ALL the temptations of sin arise from *present* objects; and as faith in the *distant* objects of religion is the most effectual, if not the only, means of counterbalancing their influence; it is of the utmost importance, to have right apprehensions about this great fundamental article.

IT is a favourite notion with some
people,

people, that where mystery begins, religion ends. If by mystery be meant — what is commonly understood by the term—a fact, which, though we cannot conceive its particular manner of existence, yet may be known to exist, and applied to valuable and important uses ; it is certain, that without belief in mysteries there can be no religion, no morality, no social commerce : all useful knowledge must be at an end, and all the movements of active life must cease their operation.

I. IN order to form proper conceptions upon this subject, it will be necessary to consider first how the case stands with regard to the maxims of present knowledge and action.

EXPERIENCE, which shows, that our present knowledge is progressive, opening and enlarging by degrees, prepares us to receive the mysteries of religion with the readiest assurance. Of all the things

things around us, we are obliged to learn the uses, by a slow and gradual process; and, in our highest state of knowledge, we really know little of them, but their uses and practical application.

WE come into the world perfect blanks: we are wrapped up in total darkness: the whole face of nature is one universal scene of mysteries. The fond parent watches over us in this blind state, attends our opening senses, and by degrees acquaints us with the general distinctions of things. Without this instruction, we know not, what is innocent, and what is hurtful to us, what is food, and what is poison, what fire or what water is, or what the first necessities of life are. Here all things are mysteries to the child: and yet he grows and strengthens, he enjoys the uses of every thing necessary to his being, as perfectly, as if he could by his own knowledge choose the good and ef-

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chew the evil. By and by, his senses acquiring some degree of vigor, he begins to observe, and speak, and, with prattling curiosity, to enquire about what he sees and hears. Parental fondness, pleased with the sweet impertinence, instructs his unfolding mind : he gets some few principles to go upon : such mysteries, as relate to animal life, open gradually upon him, and now he keeps himself from fire and water and seeks his proper food under the direction of his own narrow conceptions.

BUT as this task ceases, new mysteries arise. He is now to be taught such general principles of moral good and evil, as are necessary to social life. These too he must learn ; and he must learn them as *matter of custom*, upon implicit faith.*

He

* ————— *sapiens vitatu, quidque petitu*
 Sit melius, *causas reddet tibi* : mî satis est, si
Traditum ab antiquis morem servare, tuamque,
Dum custodis eges, vitam famamque tueri
Incolumem possim.——Hor. Sat. 1. 4. 115.

He must be taught, by little unmeaning gestures, to pray to God, to distinguish his parents and others about him according to their several relations, before he enters into the reasons of these actions.

As he advances in strength and stature, the wants of life enlarge — and what does nature do for him here? Does she voluntarily pour forth her tributary stores for his support? No, he must work out his own support by labour and industry. And here he must be taught by others, and undergo a tedious course of discipline to learn the *art and mystery* (as it is truly called) of supporting himself in future life. And when he comes to act for himself, whatever profession he chuses, whatever course he follows, he must trust his success for the most part to faith, often to probable conjecture. He lives by the common elements, whose natures he cannot investigate, he trusts to general maxims of

conduct, whose truth he never thoroughly examines. He uses many accommodations in the intercourse of commerce, which come from men and places, which he never saw—For ought he knows, the next cloaths he puts on may carry infection, and the next meat he eats may carry poison along with it.

As a merchant he entrusts his goods, as a traveller he entrusts his person, to foreign lands. But whether there be any such distant places, is no point of clear certain knowledge: he must implicitly believe it upon the credit of others.

If he takes the track of speculative knowledge, he must surrender up his mind to the direction of others; if his body is disordered, he must trust his life to the skill of others; if he possesses any thing, he must depend upon the faith and assistance of others in a thousand instances. And whether in all these cases he may find the ability and integrity, he expected, is a thing to be known
only

only by experience, which often teaches when it is too late.

BUT in the affairs of life, you will say, we have a very great degree of assurance, a moral certainty almost, that men in general will not deceive us: it is the universal interest to keep up the faith of social commerce. I allow it—I only want to show, that faith is at the bottom of all human commerce; that is, such a faith, as, I shall by and by show, we are capable of getting, with regard to Divine discoveries.

IN all matters of faith whatever, a man, if he pleases, may disbelieve, or act at least, as if he disbelieves. There is no irresistible conviction, beyond the circle, *the very narrow circle*, of intuition and personal knowledge. And if it be a just principle, that every thing is incredible which we cannot understand, the man acts a rational part, who disbelieves the existence of things and

places, which lie beyond the sphere of his own researches.

THERE cannot be a more narrow, debasing, or fallacious principle. The human faculties are in a state of progression. *When I was a child, says St. Paul, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* i. Cor. xiii. 11. We rise by a slow and tedious process from infant ignorance into some degrees of useful knowledge, and many of us into wide extended discoveries. And is the lamp of knowledge thus kindled and lighted up in every human breast, with so much painful industry and assiduous toil,—only to be extinguished at once in the shadow of darkness and of death? No, we are taught, by what we know of ourselves, to look forwards, and to expect that faculties so important, and unfolding in such a regular manner, will receive higher improvements, and that new scenes,

scenes, to which we are at present strangers, will be opened to our enlarged perceptions! That the mysteries of our manhood and improved years will be done away like the mysteries of our childhood! and human knowledge ripened into the maturity of angelical perfection!

MYSTERY is a relative term: what is mystery to a child or a mechanic, is not such to a person of enlarged observation. If mysteries, *as mysteries*, are incredible, there is an end of all instruction, all practical knowledge. You have no business to instruct your child; for what he does not know is mystery. The common artisan has no business to aid his natural strength with machines of complicated construction: for he knows nothing of the mechanical powers, but their effects and uses. A plain man has no business to aid his natural eye with glasses: for he knows nothing of the laws of refraction. The philoso-

pher has no business to believe, that the planets are vast opaque bodies, and that some of them, which appear *single* to the naked eye, are attended with a *train* of *satellites*. His natural organ gives him no such intelligence: the artificial composition of glasses, which enlarge his views, may possibly deceive him. A man has no business to be virtuous: because what constitutes the nature and essence of virtue is to this day a dispute even amongst the learned. A man needs not worship God: for there are none of his attributes, which lie not far above our comprehension.

II. SUCH absurdities, as these, flow from establishing the principle, that mysteries, as mysteries, are not credible. The grounds of the error lie, as I conceive, in not distinguishing aright in this matter. Whether such and such a *pretended* mystery be a *real* part of religion is one thing, and whether mystery

tery *at all* be credible, is another. The first, under the conduct of a proper temper, is a fair and laudable enquiry: it is necessary, amidst human weakness and corruption, to prevent the introduction of errors. But to deny the credibility of mysteries, as mysteries, is the highest contradiction to the common maxims of human life and knowledge.

THE mysteries, which are contended for in religion, are exactly similar to those of life and nature. We are capable of being assured, that they stand for things, which *really are*: we shall hereafter in a maturer stage either understand them, or see the reasons, why we cannot; and we can now in our present state of ignorance with regard to their nature, apply them to valuable and important purposes.

IF this be the common method of life, why should we not admit of it in religion?

THE *manner*, how the Divine being
is

is privy to all our actions and designs is a mystery: no one has ever attempted to explain it without repenting of his rashness in disgrace. Yet many clear principles lead to establish the general truth. Are the practical uses of the doctrine lessened by its obscurity? Clearly understood, or implicitly received, it has the same beneficial influence; it equally tends to make us reverence the invisible spectator and witness of our actions. Thus, as we saw before, men apply innumerable powers in nature, the causes and springs of whose operation they have little or no conception of.

WE cannot conceive how three Divine persons can exist in the unity of the Divine nature. Yet what difference does this make with regard to religion as a rule of conduct? Understood clearly, or implicitly received, it equally shows the importance and necessity of that particular method of salvation, in which
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the whole Divine essence has so eminently exerted and interested itself? Reason, you think, represents the Deity as one universal simple essence : so does religion, but, opening to you more exalted views, it represents him in three very interesting distinct relations to mankind as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Now it should seem that we may acquiesce as readily in these new discoveries, as the philosopher does in the revelation of his glasses, which open to him scenes in the heavens, with which he was unacquainted before.

THE doctrine of the fall and redemption, again, is involved in difficulties. Yet how do these destroy or lessen the moral application of it? Whether the nature of your disorder be clearly apprehended by you, or not, is matter of no consequence. Your business is to apply the remedy, which you find prepared and adapted to your distressful situation.

THE high privileges (and I shall
content

content myself with this one instance more) which are designed us by Almighty God in a future state, are inconceivably glorious: nature of herself has no conception of them; she hardly dares look upwards towards them with confidence. But our ignorance here too, our ignorance of the place and other circumstances of future glorification, destroys not the benefits of the doctrine. A persuasion, that God has such designs in favour of man, abundantly answers every moral purpose. Thus, we know, in common life, where a superior promises some ample but indeterminate reward to a particular act of service, a servant does not absurdly sit down, and, with sullen obstinacy, insist upon previously knowing the particulars of the reward, but flies immediately on the wings of generous zeal to the execution. Sullenness in such a case would be doubly absurd, supposing the service was meant entirely for his happiness, and
there

there were reasons, why the particular nature of the reward could not be previously discovered to him.

FOR in fact there is a very good reason, why our conceptions in religious matters should be dark, confused, and imperfect. We neither do nor can know any thing of Divine things, but by analogy,* that is, by some faint resemblance which they bear to the objects
of

* WE must lay this down for a certain truth, that we have no capacities for any *idea* of the *real nature* of immaterial things in the least degree; no more than a man born blind hath for any idea of the sun or of light. Such a man, of no more than four senses, could not be said to have only an *imperfect, glimmering, uncertain view* of things; but *no view* at all: light would be to him in this respect as thick darkness; the sun and moon and stars, the firmament and all the heavenly bodies would be to him as imperceptible by any *idea* of them as if they had no being; the word *light* would be to this man a term to which he could affix no direct idea or conception.

LET us suppose then that all men were in the same condition without the sense of *seeing*, and that God were to reveal to us there was such a thing as *light*. We having neither a name nor an idea for it, nor any capacity

of our experience. *Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before*

city of conceiving the *true nature* of it as it is in itself; it is plain this could not be revealed to us by the name light, a word wholly unknown to us, and for which we had no idea or conception. Nor would it be revealed by any *direct* and *immediate* impression of the object *itself* striking upon us; there being no organ of sensation for the perception of it. Nor would this be performed by any supernatural operation causing some little, obscure, and *confused glimmerings* of light to break in upon the *pure intellect*; for though we should suppose the pure intellect capable of this, yet still it would be impossible for one man to *communicate* this revelation to another as blind as himself; and it would require the same Almighty power after the same manner to enlighten the mind of every individual man, or he could have no sort of idea of it.

IF therefore it were to be revealed to such blind mortals that there was such a thing as light, this would be performed by the *substitution* or *mediation* of some words and ideas or conceptions already well known and familiar to us. And accordingly when we were told, that it was something which derived its being from the very substance of a glorious body called the sun, whereof we could now have no other *direct* knowledge but that of its name and its *existence*; that it was *coeval* with that sun,

before us: but the things that are in heaven, who hath searched out. Wis. ix. 16.
Our business is to acquiesce thankfully
in

fun, though it is as truly *derived* from it as a child from his father who begat him; that they were truly and really *distinct* from each other, and yet so much one and the same as to be still *inseparable*. When we were informed, that this was what *warms* and cherisheth and invigorates us after an insensible manner; and that it is from thence we continue to have *life*, and motion and subsistence; that it can diffuse itself in an instant through a vast and immense expansion; that when our eyes were opened it would help to enlare our understanding, and marvelously recreate and delight us, by enabling us to distinguish things much more accurately, and after quite another manner than ever we did before; by discovering to us myriads of new and surprizing objects, with their different arrangements and proportions; and at such distances from us and each other, as could not now enter into our hearts to imagine. After all this, we should remain as utterly void of any *direct* idea of light and its *real nature* as we did before; and the very best conception we could form of it from all this revelation, would amount to no more than an *indirect*, and *substituted*, and *complex* knowledge, collected from those ideas we were already stocked with by our four senses, and the mind's various operations upon them; instead of that *simple idea*
we

in the Divine discoveries, to comply with the conditions, and wait with patience and assurance for the accomplishment of the promises.

III. BUT what evidence, it may be asked, have we for the existence of those spiritual facts, which are but half-unveiled to us in the mysteries of religion ! If there are mysteries in nature, we have the testimony of our senses for their real existence. But what evidence is there for things which lie so much out of the compass of our experience and observation ?

I ANSWER with St. John, *if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.* Allow only, that mysteries are credible, that is, that general propo-
posi-

we should have of it, had we a proper sense for its perception.

THIS serves in some measure to illustrate the case of us mortals in this condition of imperfection and infirmity we are now in.

Brown's Div. Analogy, p. 20.

propositions may be admitted as truths, and applied to all the practical uses for which they are designed, without being clearly understood—and it is, as you saw before, our common method in life — allow but this, and then all the difficulties of the subject are at an end. The evidence for these things depends upon the general truth of Divine revelation. They come recommended to us by Divine testimony, by the authority of one, who cannot deceive, or be deceived.

“ This carries with it assurance beyond
 “ doubt, evidence beyond exception.
 “ We may as well doubt of our being,
 “ as we can whether any revelation from
 “ God, be true.”*

IN

* Mr. Hume, in his Essay upon Miracles, has endeavoured to subvert the foundation of christian faith, by an argument to the following purpose. The testimony of others is to be depended upon only in certain circumstances, and is in no circumstances equal to the clear evidence of sense: we have the evidence of sense that

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IN human matters, we may, if we please, believe or disbelieve : we may indulge a sceptical spirit in all its caprice and extravagance. We may, in the
exercise

the course of nature is regular and uninterrupted, i. e. that there are no miracles : the stronger evidence always destroys the weaker : the accounts therefore of miracles and all events out of the ordinary course of nature are incredible.

WHOEVER has a mind to see this artfully perplexed, ingenious Sophism, refuted in the most solid and elegant manner, may consult Dr. Adams' tract upon the subject.

It is sufficient for the satisfaction of most readers, to produce the sentiments of a much finer thinker and reasoner than Mr. Hume, I mean Mr. Locke.

“ THOUGH the common experience, says he, and the ordinary course of things, have justly a mighty influence on the minds of men, to make them give or refuse credit to any thing proposed to their belief ; yet there is one case wherein the strangeness of the fact lessens not the assent to a fair testimony given of it. For where such supernatural events are *suitable to ends* aimed at by him, who has the *power to change* the course of nature ; there, under such circumstances, they may be the *fitter* to procure belief, *by how much the more* they are beyond, or contrary to ordinary observation. This is the proper case of *miracles*, which, well attested, do not only find
credit

exercise of this sportive humour, make ourselves ridiculous, but do not necessarily contract guilt. The object may, perhaps, be a matter of indifference: we may not have leisure or inclination to weigh the evidences upon which its credibility

credit themselves, but give it also to other truths, which need such confirmation.

BESIDES those we have hitherto mentioned, there is one sort of propositions that challenge the highest degree of our assent upon bare testimony, whether the thing proposed, agree or disagree with common experience, and the ordinary course of things, or no. The reason whereof is, because the testimony is of such an one, as cannot deceive, nor be deceived, and that is of God himself. This carries with it assurance beyond doubt, evidence beyond exception. This is called by a particular name, *revelation*, and our assent to it, *faith*: which as absolutely determines our minds, and as perfectly excludes all wavering, as our knowledge itself; and we may as well doubt of our own being, as we can, whether any revelation from God be true. So that faith is a settled and sure principle of assent and assurance, and leaves no manner of room for doubt and hesitation. Only we must be sure, that it be a Divine revelation, and that we understand it right; else we shall expose ourselves to all the extravagancy of enthusiasm, and all the error of wrong principles, if we have faith and assurance in what is not Divine revelation." Locke's Essay, b. 4. c. 16.

dibility is established. But where the Divine Being is pleased to reveal his will, the matter becomes an object of serious and weighty importance. He has a right to our attention and obedience: it is at our peril, if we neglect or disobey his awful call.

FAITH is really an act of moral obedience. For though the ultimate act of assent belongs to the judgment which closes involuntarily with full evidence, yet the will and temper has a great share in its production. There is a serious application and attention of mind necessary to the discovery of truth; and the will often diverts or suspends this necessary attention: it often transmits to the judgment only a partial view of the evidences; it often throws them into shade, and presents objections in the most advantageous point of light. Corrupt passions second the deception: prejudices, not just principles, are made the criterion of the examination.

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IT is a just proverb, we easily believe that to be true, which we wish to be true; and disbelieve what thwarts our interests and inclinations. The process is usually this: passion at first urges us by its violence to transgress even against clear evidence, and in time draws reason over to its side.—Let any one but observe, and he will find that men's general way of thinking is determined much by their professions or habitual pursuits—enslaved to appetite, in particular, the mind becomes by degrees corrupted, loses its true taste, and begins to think that natural and right, which custom has reconciled to it. To a well-practised miser, I suppose, liberality becomes a mystery; to a proud man humility is a paradox, and to a sensual man purity of heart an idle vision.

THERE is, besides, no truth, which is not encumbered with some difficulties; there is no fact, which appears not dif-

ferently, in different attitudes and positions. In this embarrassment of things, it is difficult often even for the dispassionate to form a steady right opinion: others almost necessarily err according to the bias of their respective prejudices.

AND if we attend to fact, we shall accordingly find, that there is generally something vicious, where men renounce the comforts and hopes of religion; something wrong in their cast of judgment, temper, or disposition. Stupid indolence dreads the trouble, gay dissipation dreads the gloom of serious reflection. Anxious business wants the time, professed pleasure wants inclination, to examine into the pretensions of religion. And in the very act of attention, there are numbers, who will be gratified only, according to their own peculiar tastes. The Jew expects a sign, the Greek wants wisdom. The quaint critic wants elegance of style; the abstracted philosopher wants demon-

demonstrative clearness or systematic refinement. Greatness scorns to be taught by fishermen and mechanics; and singularity scorns to think in common with the herd.

To men, labouring under any disqualifications, the hearing of truth is an irksome task. They either suffer it not to reach their hearts, or they hasten to forget its disagreeable effects amidst the loose laughter of licentious company, or the tumult of former occupations.

THEY will apply any delusive artifice to evade its general force. Something incidently arises, for instance, which, half understood, is capable of being perverted: the ridicule of this seizes their attention and serves to efface all serious impressions. Something arises, which is liable to doubt or objection. Happy in this little perplexity, they think it sufficient to counterbalance the whole concurrent evidences of religion. All disputers, all writers against religion

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proceed

proceed in this way: their cavils are topical, and levelled against particular little parts in the grand scheme of redemption. By such a method all truth in the world may be embarrassed and overruled; the volume of nature may be obscured, and the foundations of the most useful of human sciences overthrown.

BUT let men come to religious enquiry with the usual dispositions of finding truth, let them have proper application of mind, let them be serious, attentive, and well inclined to the general interests of virtue, and faith will spring up of course: it meets with its proper soil; *a good and honest heart*: it strikes firm root and grows up, proof against such assailing temptations as arise in the future course of life.

IF we but bring this teachable temper to religion, and seek nothing in it but a rule of virtuous conduct and a scheme of saving grace, we shall find a
fort

fort of amiable prejudice in its favour ; under the influence of which, though we shall carefully examine its external evidences to guard against deception, yet we shall give them a fair hearing and candid examination.

IT was with reason, then, that disbelief is put down in the catalogue of vices. It flows from vicious principles ; it stops up the avenues of conviction, and destroys the means of reformation ; and is therefore the justest object of Divine animadversion. *And this is the condemnation, (says our Saviour) that light, is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. John, iii. 19.*

IV. BUT what, it is asked, is faith ? how is it to be acquired ?

IT is such a firm persuasion of the truth of religion, as forms a steady principle of virtuous conduct.

THE first stage in this virtue is *profession.*

sion. As *faith comes by hearing*, it is necessary to keep within the means and opportunities of grace. All christians have a right to the outward communion of the church, until they voluntarily forfeit it by flagitious behaviour. As long then as they keep up this sacred intercourse, though upon the whole supine and careless members, there are hopes of their improvement. In some happy hour or other, the grace of God may touch their hearts, and bring them to repentance. But when they put the ordinances of God at defiance, when they desert or profane his house, when they prostitute his day to the purposes of unnecessary business, profane idleness, or sinful diversions, when they roll on in an unvaried succession of perplexing cares or besotting amusements, and leave the mind no intervals for thoughtfulness and reflection; their case must be as desperate, as the patient's,
who

who laughs at his physician and despises the means of his recovery.

BUT bare profession, an unreflecting acknowledgment of truth, is not sufficient; it is but a dead unanimated image. Meditation must convert it into a living active principle. And this must be by considering the end and importance of religion.

IT was not designed to fill our heads with airy notions, or amuse us with idle speculations. It is a rule of conduct. Its doctrines are to enforce its precepts and its precepts to direct our actions. By considering religion in this manner, we shall make it—what it really is—the power of God unto salvation; not a traditional system, to be imposed upon us, like our names, without our consciousness, and to be continued, like popular customs, with an unmeaning acquiescence. We shall then only consider ourselves as true believers, when we *act* and *live* as believers.

NOR is this enough: a man may believe,

believe, and yet fall away—The first impressions then must be kept alive and vigorous by repeated acts and habits of recollection. Faith, like all faculties both of mind and body, is weakened and unnerved by disuse. The clearest truths lie dormant and useless in the mind without proper exercise. Satisfied with our first conviction, we lay them as it were aside, and forget their application. Now habitual recollection is the only remedy against this inconvenience, especially at such seasons as are appropriated by nature and religion to the sacred purpose.

A HEATHEN sage,* taught in the oriental schools, advises his followers :
*review the actions of the day, before you
 close*

* Μηδ' υπνον μαλακοισιν επ' ομμασι προσδεξασθαι,
 Πριν των ημερινων εργων τρις εκατον επελθειν.
 Πη παρεθην ; τι δ' ερεξα ; τι μοι δεον εκ ετελεσθη ;
 Αρξαμενος δ' απο πρωτη επεξιθι· και μετεπειτα,,
 Δειλα μεν εκπρηξας, επιπλησσο· χρησα δε, τερπει.

Pythagoras.

close your eyes at night: ask yourself, where have I offended against the laws of virtue? what have I done which I ought not to have done? and what have I left undone, which I ought to have done? An admirable lesson to many, who neglect the greater light of revelation, from whence the maxim originally came!

NATURE wonderfully seconds the useful instruction. Somehow, when the evening spreads her sober mantle over the world, and hushes the tumults of the day, the mind naturally grows calm and serious, and composes itself for contemplation. Happy is it, where this composure is properly directed, where it is employed to call our ways to remembrance, and to prepare virtuous resolutions for the returning business of life. Happier still, if again, when returning light awakes us with recruited spirits to resume our former pursuits, we employ some portion of this time to confirm our resolutions

resolutions, and to whisper to ourselves, that we are going out to labour in the world of *one*, whose eye will be upon us, and who expects a faithful account of all our actions.

SHORT acts of this kind are in every one's power — at least, no one can be said to have the smallest care about his life, who attends not the revolutions of religious seasons, the sabbaths, festivals, and sacraments. Whosoever employs these to quicken old impressions, and to review his former life and regulate it by the express will of God, cannot miscarry or greatly err.

So much man can do for the attainment of faith—the rest depends upon the Holy Spirit, from whom faith, among other good and perfect gifts, ultimately proceeds.

V. BUT do we not, it is objected, often see people living in the *grosslest immoralities*, under the profession of gospel faith?

faith? We do: but these men have not faith: their faith is but a traditional prejudice. True faith founded as it ought to be in serious enquiry and just reflection, is a certain means of conquering all worldly temptations.

THIS is the last head of consideration I proposed to myself, namely the happy fruits and advantages of christian faith.

As the stream cannot rise higher than its source, worldly motives will never lift us above the world. Human motives indeed may carry us to a certain length. We may practise several virtues from complexion and habit; from the obligations of honour, or the terrors of the magistrate. But these reach not all cases and circumstances. Faith is an universal restraint. It reaches the first springs of action, and operates in all situations of life.

IT guards the heart, from whence are the issues of life: do wicked desires arise? Faith tells the christian, that
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his God is privy to the inmost secrets of the heart. Does privacy tempt? Faith whispers, that he always attends our steps. Does power prompt to acts of oppression? Faith presents a mightier power above, the avenger of all injustice. Are we amidst the temptations of wealth? Faith tells us, riches are the gift of God, and that he expects an account of their use. Are we poor or distressed? Faith proposes an all-sufficient Maker to reward virtuous patience.

THERE are no allurements, which faith cannot resist, no evils or calamities which it cannot disarm.

OUR ideas of greatness are relative. They depend upon the capacity and knowledge of the observer. The rude peasant conceives, that nothing can be greater *in kind* than the neighbouring town, that bounds his travels.* The
playful

* URBEM, quam dicunt Romam, Melibæe, putavi,
Stultus ego, huic nostræ similem—Virg. Ecl. 1. 20.

playful infant finds his highest happiness in the most trifling toy: grown a little older, he wonders he could be so silly, despises his smaller play-things, builds his little houses, mounts his hobby horse, and apes the man. As knowledge enlarges, he sees the folly of these things too, and takes to some more serious occupations.

BLIND creatures, that we are! how easy is it for us to see, that the time is coming, when we shall look back upon all pursuits merely worldly—as we do now upon the follies of earlier life—with contempt, as concerns beneath a rational creature's notice!

FAITH helps us to anticipate this improving view, and, under its instruction, to balance between time and eternity, between the interests of a perishing life and the salvation of an immortal soul. Temporal things, upon this comparison, lose all their importance. Worldly goods are stripped of all their

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glare,

glare, and evils of all their terrors. Life sinks into a poor insignificant scene. Virtue becomes the sole business of man. All other things a secondary mean concern.

“ O SOVEREIGN disposer of things !
“ Give me this powerful grace of faith ;
“ let me live in the spirit as well as
“ profession of it ! Then, while I pursue
“ heaven as my inheritance, I shall not
“ live useless in the earth : I shall serve
“ the world ; and not add to its confusion.
“ I shall serve it by virtuous industry ; and
“ not disturb it by fraud or violence. I
“ shall not seek riches with the furious
“ rage of avarice ; but, where they flow
“ as the gift of thy Providence, I shall
“ receive them with modest gratitude,
“ and spread them with useful liberali-
“ ty. I shall not fly poverty by any
“ vicious methods ; but when it comes,
“ it shall come without guilt, as thy
“ appointment, and thy grace shall
“ sanctify it. — Thou knowest what
“ worldly

" worldly condition is best for me : my
 " blindness forbids me to ask for any
 " thing, but salvation. Blessed God !
 " whatever tends most to this great end,
 " be that my portion ! Be it poverty,
 " or riches, honour or dishonour, health
 " or disease, life or death, the choice
 " be thine ; and mine the wisdom to
 " improve under thy dispensations !"

FAITH teaches us to pray and act in
 such a spirit. It tends, therefore, when
 properly understood, to make us the
 most useful citizens of this world, while
 it aims at a heavenly inheritance. God
 give us all grace *so to pass through things*
temporal, that we finally lose not the
things eternal !

28 SEP 60

S E R M O N X I.

Of Christian Industry.

ST. B. R. M. O. N. T.

LABORER NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME
WHICH IS THE FIRST TIME
WHICH IS THE FIRST TIME
WHICH IS THE FIRST TIME



CHRISTIANITY gives the truth
notion of independence. It shows
such a proportion of worldly care, as
the necessities of our present being re-
quire, but does not attract attention
where it ought to be upon the double
interest of our future being.
EXTERNAL things are comparatively
of a mean concern. They are some-
thing

S E R M O N XI.

JOHN, vi. 27.

LABOUR NOT FOR THE MEAT, WHICH
PERISHETH, BUT FOR THAT MEAT
WHICH ENDURETH UNTO EVER-
LASTING LIFE, WHICH THE SON OF
MAN SHALL GIVE UNTO YOU.

CHRISTIANITY gives us the truest
notion of independence. It allows
such a proportion of worldly care, as
the necessities of our present being re-
quire; but fixes our principal attention,
where it ought to be, upon the durable
interests of our future being.

EXTERNAL things are comparatively
but a mean concern. They are some-

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thing

thing foreign to our nature : they are in the power of the infinite chances and vicissitudes of human life. But the moral treasures of man, christian virtues, will attend him through all the stages of his existence.

I. IT is strange, any mistake should be made among christians, in a case, that is capable of so obvious a distinction; and it is a pity, that there should be a necessity to prove the lawfulness of worldly care, in a life, so much disturbed and convulsed by the excesses of this spirit.

BUT the enthusiast has his unreasonable claims upon Providence; and the idle and extravagant, blessing his stars that he is not one of *the covetous whom God and man abhorreth*, lives a burden to the community, and thus equally trespasses against the laws of the gospel and the order and appointment of nature.

THOUGH

THOUGH GOD manifestly superintends the course of human affairs, yet his Providence generally exerts itself only in supporting, assisting and blessing those natural means of *self-provision*, with which he has endued us in different proportions according to the exigences of a connected state.

HE that gave us wants, and at the same time gave us feet to move, hands to work, and heads to contrive; has plainly intimated to us, that we must use these powers, as instruments, under the blessing of his Providence, for our support.—Society could not otherwise subsist. For society is nothing but the circulation and exchange of mutual labour and service: it is a great machine, the welfare of which depends upon the co-operation of all the parts: and he, who sits down unactive and useless in this busy scene, is a clog and prejudice to the whole, and offends against the laws of the common author of this constitution.

AND

AND the scripture is so far from countenancing a neglect of the great natural duty of industry, upon any pretence, that I know of no duty which is more strongly and repeatedly enforced. *For even when we were with you, (saith St. Paul) this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat;* ii. Thes. iii. 10. and elsewhere, *we beseech you, (says he) that ye study to be quiet and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, that ye may walk honestly and have lack of nothing.* i. Thes. iv. 11, 12. *

INDEED, industry is one of the principal virtues, which can be exerted by the lower orders of mankind: it is the trust and talent, for which they are accountable

* ENTHUSIASTS have considered the text as forbidding all worldly labour: *labour NOT for the bread that perisheth.* In fact, the scripture often expresses things absolutely, which are to be understood comparatively. *Let us NOT love in word neither in tongue, BUT in deed* and

countable, to the common Judge. In an humble, honest, contented discharge of it, their principal duties consist; and in this, they are so far from having any just reason to murmur or repine, that they are truly more happy, than the greatest and most splendid pageants of fortune.

and in truth. i. John, iii. 18. Did the apostle mean to forbid all outward expressions of civility? The gospel enjoins the contrary in a hundred places. He meant only to recommend inward love as of most importance and value. *I desired mercy and NOT sacrifice.* Hos. vi. 6. Every one knows that sacrifice was a necessary part of the Jewish worship. The prophet then means, that God loves mercy *more than* sacrifice. *Let no man seek HIS OWN, but every man ANOTHER'S wealth.* i. Cor. x. 24. I think there is no man who would wish, at least the scripture permits no one, to explain this text as exclusive of all self-love. *Christ sent me NOT, (says St. Paul) to baptize BUT to preach the gospel.* i. Cor. i. 17. And yet, he did baptize as we see in the verses before. He meant that his great object was to preach the gospel, and leave the administration of the rite to ministers of inferior character, as we see St. Peter actually did, Acts, x. 48. *Baptism is (according to St. Peter) NOT the putting away of the filth of the flesh, BUT the answer of a good conscience towards God.* i. Peter, iii. 21. Barclay considers this as forbidding the outward form entirely: how justly, the reader may determine from the above similar forms of expression, to which others might be added.

fortune. Let them only observe: Let them call to view the awful time, when high and low shall be summoned to give an account of their respective offices in life. When the mighty ones of the earth are to be strictly examined “ what
“ hast thou done with all that wealth
“ and power which I committed to thy
“ charge, what naked hast thou clothed,
“ what hungry hast thou fed, how
“ much hast thou engrossed in the narrow gulph of thy avarice or thy sensuality” (dreadful questions! heavy account!)—they will have less to reckon for, for they received less — “ Lord, I
“ received but one small talent, and I exercised it; I was contented in my low
“ condition, I was honest and industrious; I did all the little good that lay
“ in the power of my hand to do; I
“ suffered no temptation to divert me
“ from my duty, and no idle business
“ to draw me from thy house and service.”

II. BUT

II. BUT if there be a degree of care which is not only innocent, but laudable; let us in the next place, for the sake of avoiding unnecessary scruples, endeavour to discover that degree of worldly care, which is unlawful and inconsistent with a christian temper.

AND here indeed lies the great delusion! There are so many false glosses and artificial colourings, under which a worldly temper conceals itself, that it is difficult to settle the precise limits between a moderate and immoderate concern about the world. The exact knowledge of every man's case in this respect belongs to his own conscience, and that God, who is the searcher of hearts. All, that the ministers of religion can do, is to propose the discriminating marks or symptoms of the disease, and leave it to their hearers to make the proper application. — These marks are three: when worldly things are sought by unlawful *means*, for unlawful

lawful *ends*, or, though the means and ends are lawful, with an *eagerness*, *anxiety* and *solicitude*, inconsistent with the higher concerns of man.

WHEN we use any unlawful means, any unjust, fraudulent, or uncharitable means of aggrandizing our estate, this is an instance of a worldly spirit, requiring little either to illustrate or aggravate it. Our life is not to be compounded for, at the expence of our integrity. No wants can justify a crime. Leave it to God to remove your necessities: he will either remove them in his own good time, when the purposes of trial and visitation are completed; or he will abundantly reward your patient suffering probity, in the proper season of retribution.

THE question upon this head is short and plain: do you mean to refund those possessions which you get by unrighteous means, or do you not? If you *intend* it; why will you do, what you must wish

wish at the expence of worlds to have undone again? for repentance means such a real unfeigned abhorrence of sin. Why will you commit crimes, which it may be soon out of your power to repair? for offences of this sort soon multiply beyond the reach of recollection.— But if you do *not* mean to make full and adequate satisfaction to your injured brother, then your repentance, without which no sinner can see the Lord, is not truly complete; for to repent of sin is to restore all the fruits of it, and to repair all its mischievous consequences.

OUR worldly cares are unlawful when we propose unlawful *ends* to ourselves in the prosecution of them. The proper use of wealth, next to making a decent provision for the necessities of ourselves and nearer dependents, is to do good: it is not to feed the insatiate eye of avarice, to support the parade and splendor of worldly pride, or the riot and excesses of brutal intemperance. It is
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to do good; to distribute to the wants of our unhappier brethren, whose unsuccessful honesty at once recommends and entitles them to relief. — As riches are not to be *employed* in the service of our lusts, so are they not to be *sought* with a *view* to such a criminal subserviency. —

It is, without doubt the will of him, who placed us here, that there should be differences of ranks and conditions; for the world could not subsist without subordination. And accordingly we see him often raise individuals by a blessing upon their industry, or an uncommon train of fortunate occurrences, in order to keep up the harmony of the constitution. — But let us leave the preservation of things to his disposal. Let us receive his gifts with gratitude, and employ them with beneficence; and we shall concur with the views of his Providence; we shall do the good he designed us for, and secure for ourselves

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an admiffion, when this fugitive fcene is over, into everlasting habitations.

BUT when we are anxious, folicitous, and impatient in our purfuits, (the third fymptom I mentioned of a worldly temper,) this is a plain intimation of an immoderate attachment of the heart to prefent interefts. When this is the cafe, the thoughts of life will interfere with the concerns of futurity, they will encroach upon the offices of religion, and indifpofe the mind for thofe warmer emotions in our intercourfe with God, in which the life and fpirit of devotion confifts. Befides, the tranfition from eager defire to undue methods is to be apprehended in fuch a ftate of mind. *They that WILL be rich* (fays St. Paul) *they that are anxiously and eagerly intent upon this as a main purpofe of life, fall into temptation and a fnare.* i. Tim. vi. 9. It is a dangerous temper, which every wife man will rather cautiously avoid, than indulge: it is too natural,

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God

GOD knows, to frail creatures, so much conversant with sensible objects which are ever spreading their dazzling temptations before our eyes. But frequent recollection in some questions of the following kind will be the best preservative in so slippery a situation. "Is the preservation of my virtue and innocence my first and principal object? Do my worldly cares and business move on, in just subordination to my higher interests? Having the necessaries of life, am I therewith content? Or, if the good things of life flow in upon me as the natural and easy fruits of a moderate industry, or the voluntary gifts of a propitious Providence; do I set my heart upon them, and make them not the instruments of beneficence? Am I humble and content, and honest in a lower sphere; temperate, charitable, and religious in a higher station?"

ONE'S own conscience must be the resolver of such enquiries. The boundaries

daries between honest industry and worldly solicitude are hard to be distinguished in their nearer approaches : so much are they confounded by the exaggerations of censure and malevolence on one hand, and the fair pretences of sanctified hypocrisy on the other. But amidst all the errors of deluded men, wisdom will be justified of all her children. We cannot serve both worlds, but by considering the present as introductory to the other.

IN a word, then, the religious man's care for the world will move on in subordination to the duties of his holy calling, and the nature of the country to which he is travelling. If he is poor, he lives soberly and piously upon the fruits of his honest diligence, and travels on towards the grave a chearful contented pilgrim, satisfied with the hope of resting from his labours and receiving the rewards of his perseverance hereafter. If he is rich, he is neither insolent nor oppressive, intemperate nor sen-

sual; while he employs his possessions to support his necessary rank in life, he preserves a just sense of his real equality with the meanest of mankind; he passes along, as a traveller indeed of greater distinction, but with thankfulness to God, who made him to differ from his brethren; and with diligence, as one, whose riches cannot distinguish him from them in an other state.

III. AND why can we not look upon life, in this just and proper view; why can we not pass through it with this noble indifference? — For what is life, that it should stand in competition with the rewards of immortality? — The happiness of man no more lieth in abundance, than health does in the mass of an overgrown bloated carcase. It is peace of mind, the comfort of a good conscience, the moderation of well-regulated desires, that gives the true enjoyment. If then you see multitudes
around

around you, busily employed in searching for happiness, amidst abundance, if you hear them cry, *lo! here it is in honour*, or *there it is in riches*, believe them not: thousands have made the trial, and have owned themselves disappointed.

PLEASURE is to be enjoyed only by the channel of natural appetites; and luxury, amidst all its refinements, could never invent one new appetite, or enlarge the capacity of those, which nature gives us. We can receive no more than warmth and comfort from cloathing; we must hunger before we eat, and thirst before we drink with pleasure. A sufficiency, (and the more moderate the better,) best answers this purpose; all beyond this is loathing and distaste, sickness and disease.

OR, were earthly things the real *materials* of happiness, their uncertainty renders the pursuit of them irrational. They are fugitive and mutable; depend-

ing upon chance and accident ; liable to infinite vicissitudes and revolutions :

“ We might (as* one justly observes)
“ with more reason think the winds
“ and weather certain, than earthly
“ goods : for the former, though vari-
“ able, have their revolutions, and
“ turn about to the same point a-
“ gain ; but an estate once gone, fel-
“ dom reverts to the right owner.” —

And do we not see this verified by fact and experience ? Who is there among us, that hath lived forty years upon the earth, and hath not seen strange changes and alterations in the face of things ? Let him look back and see, what a varying and shifting scene it appears upon retrospection ! — New families arising, and old ones perishing and sinking into oblivion ! Wealth accumulating, and making itself wings and flying away,
in

* Dr. South.

in endless rotation! — What wise man would be for fixing up his tabernacle in such a world of instability and change? What folly to think of leaving a name and making a family? — True wisdom lieth in fixing happiness in something more certain and durable; in virtue, which is strictly our own property; independent of fortune; which will accompany us in all changes and revolutions, will sweeten the gifts of a propitious Providence, and comfort and illumine the cottage of adversity.

BUT though wealth should be *firm*, yet the faculties of man are in perpetual decay. *I am, this day, (said the old and aged Barzillai,) fourscore years old, and can I any more taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I bear the voice of singing men or singing women?* ii. Sam. xix. 35. Life, if it is short, is soon cut off from all its comforts; if it continues awhile, it exhausts and wears itself

out by use : and, where the powers decay, all enjoyment is at an end.

BUT though life and wealth were firm and permanent,—yet the time is coming, when they must have their period. The time is coming, when we must die—when our pomp shall not follow us beyond the grave.—Then a new scene will open upon us ; where nothing, but a good conscience, can stand us in any stead—where riches will not profit, whither wealth can only follow us in good works ; where the virtuous Lazarus will be advanced above the prosperous sinner, and the faithful servant above his unrighteous Lord.

WOULD you have a proof of the certainty of such a state?—I appeal to the world ; I appeal to your own feelings and experience. God would not have given us the infinite desires after happiness, which you see so wretchedly and uselessly misemployed by man in worldly pursuits, were they not designed to lead

lead us to an infinite good. Nothing less is suited to our boundless capacities. Wide as the world is, it is finite: were it wider, it is not as durable as the soul; and this shows that happiness must be sought beyond a sphere, the fashion of which passeth away.

SEEK it there, where it is only to be found; in the favour and approbation of him, who cannot disappoint our hopes, who has promised a felicity adequate to our utmost capacities; too faithful to deceive us, and too powerful to want the means of fulfilling his promises.

lead us to an infinite good. Nothing
less is fitted for our boundless capacities.
While the world is finite: there
is more, it is not as desirable as the
good: and this shows that happiness
must be sought beyond a sphere, the
radius of which passes away.

But it is there, where it is only to be
found in the favor and approbation
of that P. R. M. O. who appears our
hope, who has provided a testimony
quite to our utmost capacities. Too
often the adversary and the power
ful to want the means of fulfilling his

28 SE 60

S E R M O N XII.

Of the Means of Religion.

SERMON XII

JOHN, IV. 23.

—THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS SHALL

WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT

XII.



Of the Means of Religion.
It is generally agreed, that religion is
a spiritual power, but still, a per-
plexed and important question remains,
what are we to think of the outward
forms of religion? Are they useful or
are they hurtful, to the interests of re-
ligion? — They have indeed been con-
sidered as necessary means of its subsist-
ence: but the world, we are told, is
getting rid, as fast as it can, of vulgar
errors: this notion too may be of the
number:

SERMON XII.

JOHN, iv. 23.

— THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS SHALL
WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT
AND IN TRUTH —.

IT is generally agreed, that religion is
a spiritual service: but still, a per-
plexed and important question remains,
what are we to think of the outward
forms of religion? Are they useful or
are they hurtful, to the interests of re-
ligion? — They have indeed been con-
sidered as necessary means of its subsist-
ence: but the world, we are told, is
getting rid, as fast as it can, of vulgar
errors: this notion too may be of the
number:

number: there are many people, who confidently tell us that it is so. — What are we to think upon this interesting disputed question?

IF we attend to the testimony of experience, we shall find it entirely in favour of the former opinion. In fact, no religious sect has ever subsisted without external forms. Those, who have railed against *carnal ordinances* with most vehemence, and professed to walk in the highest abstraction of the spirit, have confuted their pretensions by their own practice. As soon as the fervor and rage of enthusiasm has subsided, they have found themselves — upon a footing with other men — compelled, by the common weakness of nature, to embody and associate together under particular modes, for the purpose of keeping up their tenets, and of detaching and distinguishing themselves from the rest of the world.

THE necessity is founded in the nature

ture of man. It is not pretended, that I know of, by any, than men are universally capable of being their own teachers and advisers. Religion, then, must be a *social* concern; and if social, there must be some outward methods of communication. And outward methods of communication are nothing else, as I take it, but carnal ordinances, that is, outward modes, bodily actions, sensible expressions of the inward sentiments and dispositions.

THIS therefore being the case, I think we may as well use the methods, which are appointed by the author of our salvation. If we *must* have outward means, we may as well make use of *his* means. They have this prejudice in their favour: He, who made us, may be supposed to know what is best adapted to the exigencies of our nature; and, if he is pleased to communicate any moral graces to us under the use of outward means, it is more probable, that his

graces

graces should attend the methods of his own appointment, than such as are invented by us in the wanton spirit of innovation, or the frowardness of caprice.

If we examine into the state of things around us, we shall find that there is no period of life, where we stand not in need of outward assistance, in our *moral*, as well as we do in our *animal* capacity.

I. THE care of virtue and religion begins, before we are capable of doing any thing for ourselves. It begins, before reason awakes, and exerts itself. Habit, though it swells and enlarges, like a stream, as it descends through life, yet has small and remote beginnings, and often derives its source from the most distant periods of infancy. Many little acts is the infant capable of, which, however unmeaning and mechanical in their first exertion, may be of the utmost importance in determining his

his future cast of temper and behaviour. He will be imperceptibly corrupted, if his opening senses are not kept from infectious objects, his yet-spotless mind from polluting images, and his lisping tongue from debasing language. It is hard to say, how soon bad impressions begin to fix their stain. They flow in under the easy vehicle of sensible images, which are ever crowding in upon the mind: whereas the ideas of virtue are of a more refined and abstracted nature; to be excited only, where there is something of reflexion, by careful instruction.

WHEN the mind has been thus guarded against bad impressions, and begins to open, and observe, good principles are then to be gradually instilled. We are born without any actual knowledge: we are formed only, as the earth is with respect to useful seeds, with a capacity, fitness and disposition to receive it; care and culture must implant it, and raise it up to maturity. Vices indeed grow of

X them-

themselves in a spontaneous manner : their seeds are scattered every where around us in the common objects and customs of a wicked world : we cannot converse with the world, without taking them in, at some busy sense or other : the rank soil of human corruption favours their growth. It requires the assiduous hand of moral culture to weed them out, and raise up useful virtues to any perfection.

IT might be expected indeed, that nature had done as much for man, as she has for the inferior creatures. Their instincts, we see, ever faithful and infallible guides, direct them to all the purposes of their being. But it is not so with man. All his instincts require direction and restraint. Benevolence, undirected, defeats its own purposes, mistakes its objects, hurts social life as much as it benefits, and destroys itself. Self-love draws every thing into its own narrow vortex, is at war with all around it,

it, and arms the keenest passions against the peace of the world. The love of the sexes is a vagrant appetite; undirected, it knows no social distinctions, and has no tastes or sentiments above the beasts of the field. The awe of a Supreme Being (which I take to be a natural impression) knows not, what he is, and where to direct its homage. The sense of moral decency and shame are equally blind: habit perverts them and fixes them upon improper objects. And reason and religion, which are designed to regulate and direct these blind principles, if not cultivated very soon, will lose their use: bad habits will have formed themselves, and such instincts, as predominate in the constitution, will have taken a wrong direction, and acquired an ascendancy, beyond the reach, perhaps, of future instruction.

II. THE instruction, therefore, of children, (to apply these general observations)

vations) though a great object of parental care, yet is too important a concern to be left solely to such an inadequate provision. Every wise state has considered education, as a public concern. Some have even torn children from the too indulgent arms of parental fondness, and put them under public tuition.

A HAPPY medium is observed in the christian institution of BAPTISM.* Parents have their private rights preserved to them;

* BAPTISM being intended for the sign and means of our purification from sin; water, the proper element for purifying and cleansing, is appointed to be used in it. There is indeed a sect, sprung up amongst us within a little more than an hundred years, that deny this appointment: and make the christian baptism signify only the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost upon a person. But our Saviour expressly requires that we be *born of water*, as well as *of the Spirit*, to enter into the kingdom of God. John iii. 5. And not only *John*, his Forerunner, *baptized with water*. Mat. iii. 11. but his *disciples* also, by his direction, *baptized in the same manner*, even *more than John*. John iv. 1, 2. When therefore

them ; but are reminded at the same time, in the most solemn manner, of their duty to the public and to God. This at once consults the tender feelings of

fore he bad them afterwards *teach all nations, baptizing them.* Mat. xxviii. 19. what baptism could they understand, but that, in which he had employed them before? And accordingly we find, they did understand that. *Philip*, we read, baptized the Samaritans : Acts viii. 12. not with the Holy Ghost, for the apostles went down some time after to do that themselves : Verse 14, &c. but with water undoubtedly, as we find, in the same chapter, he did the Eunuch : where the words are, *Here is water : what doth hinder me to be baptized? And they went down to the water : and he baptized him.* Verse 36, 38. Again, after *Cornelius*, and his friends, had received the Holy Ghost, and so were already baptized in that sense, *Peter* asks, *can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?* Acts x. 47. When therefore *John* says, that *he baptized with water, but Christ should baptize with the Holy Ghost.* Mat. iii. 11. he means, not that christians should not be baptized with water, but that they should have the Holy Ghost poured out upon them also, in a degree that *John's* disciples had not. When *St. Peter* says, *the baptism, which saveth us, is not the washing away the filth of the flesh.* i. Pet. iii. 21. he

of nature, and the higher interests of a moral creature. How many parents have little or no thought beyond the indulgence of their brutish appetites?

How

means, it is not the mere outward act, unaccompanied by a suitable inward disposition. When *St. Paul* says, that *Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel*; i. Cor. i. 17. he means, that preaching was the principal thing he was to do in person: to baptize, he might appoint others under him; and it seems, commonly did: as *St. Peter* did not baptize *Cornelius* and his friends himself, but *commanded them to be baptized*: Acts x. 48. and we read in *St. John*, that *Jesus baptized not, but his disciples*. John iv. 2,

WATER-BAPTISM therefore is appointed. And why the church of Rome should not think water sufficient in baptism, but aim at mending what our Saviour hath directed, by mixing oil and balsam with it, and dipping a lighted torch into it, I leave them to explain.

THE precise manner, in which water shall be applied in baptism, scripture hath not determined. For the word, baptize, means only to wash: whether that be done by plunging a thing under water, or pouring the water upon it. The former of these; burying, as it were, the person baptized, in the water, and raising him out of it again, without question was anciently the more usual method: on account of which, *St. Paul* speaks of baptism,

How many know nothing of the importance of a virtuous education? How many are there too busy, how many too indolent,

baptism, as representing both the death, and burial, and resurrection of Christ, and what is grounded on them, our being *dead and buried to sin*; renouncing it, and being acquitted of it; and our rising again, *to walk in newness of life*, Rom. vi. 4, 11. Col. ii. 12. being both obliged and enabled to practice, for the future, every duty of piety and virtue. But still the other manner of washing, by pouring or sprinkling of water, sufficiently expresses the same two things: our being by this ordinance purified from the guilt of sin, and bound and qualified to keep ourselves pure from the defilement of it. Besides, it very naturally represents that *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*, i. Pet. i. 2. to which our salvation is owing. And the use of it seems not only to be foretold by the prophet *Isaiah*, speaking of our Saviour, *he shall sprinkle many nations*, Isaiah lii. 15. that is, many shall receive his baptism; and by the prophet *Ezekiel*, *then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean*: Ezek. xxxvi. 25. but to be had in view also by the apostle, where he speaks of *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*. Heb. x. 22. And though it was less frequently used in the first ages, it must almost of necessity have been sometimes used: for instance, when baptism was administered, as we read in the Acts it was, to several

indolent, to execute the charge? How many ignorant of the real principles of virtue, or destitute of skill and address to instil them in an effectual manner? How many mistake the care really due to their offspring, and unhappily employ their love, in indulging hurtful humours, rather than removing them by the disagreeable severity of wholesome correction? In heaping up large inheritances, rather than providing the better treasures of useful virtue?

THIS

thousands at once. Acts ii. 41. when it was administered on a sudden in private houses, as we find it, in the same book, to the goaler and all his family, the very night in which they were converted. Acts xvi. 33. or when sick persons received it; in which last case, the present method was always taken, because the other, of dipping them, might have been dangerous. And from the same apprehension of danger in these colder countries, pouring the water is allowed, even when the person baptized is in health. And the particular manner being left at liberty, that is now universally chosen, which is looked on as safer: because were there more to be said for the other than there is: *God will have Mercy, and not sacrifice.* Hof. vi. 6. Mat. ix. 13. xii. 7.

Arch B. Secker's Lect. on the Cat. Vol. 2. p. 222.

THIS institution then calls careless parents to reflexion, gives instruction to the ignorant, and, though it creates no new obligation, yet wonderfully corroborates the calls of nature, as far as free creatures can be bound; I mean, by a deliberate engagement, solemnly entered into, in the presence of God and the face of the world.

BUT parents may die, they may be careless, or otherwise disqualified for the discharge of this duty. What is to be done in this case? Are guiltless orphans to be turned out helpless and unprincipled, into a wide disordered world? Are they to suffer for the folly or misfortune of parents? Are moral creatures of so little importance? Suppose then, that, *besides* the natural parents, some near relations or friends were engaged in the same trust, under a solemn promise of *supplying* the defects of parental care, whenever they *should happen*; would not this be providing for
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exigences, which must frequently arise in the course of things? Can we take too many securities for the discharge of a duty, of such great and weighty importance?

BESIDES, the duties to be taught children, are the duties of manly life. Is there not then a further use in the mode of the institution? Does it not remind numbers at the same time of our common obligation of leading a good life; instructing not only the natural and adoptive parents, but the whole body, who are witnesses of the solemn transaction?

THIS provision, again, has been made by the church, in insisting upon having SPONSORS for the baptized infant. Examine this institution in its first principles, and nothing can be more rational; attend seriously to these principles, in the execution of the trust, and nothing can be more useful to the world.

I HAVE only considered the child as yet,

as

as a mere moral creature—but the views of the gospel are still more exalted. Baptism is a rite of Divine appointment, to take children from a state of corruption, into a state of grace, and a covenant of mercy, to which the blessings of heaven are annexed. The purifying element is an emblem of what the Holy Spirit does for us in the great work of regeneration.

III. By degrees, the child growing up, is to enter into life, and to take the conduct and management of himself. No one can deny this to be an important state. The first step or measure often determines the future life. It is now high time to add principle to practice, deliberation and choice to habit, and to usher your charge with proper advantage upon the stage of action.

THE church has made provision for this too, in her office of CONFIRMATION. Attend to the natural language of such an institution, and nothing can be conceived

ceived more rational, or instructive. The minister of God appears here with the authority of an experienced guide, who has travelled the road before, and challenges the young adventurers attention. “ You are going now, (he virtuously says to every youth) to enter into the world. You have as yet but seen it at a safe distance, under the watchful eye of guardian care. Greater dangers await you — such as you cannot conceive in the unsuspicious security of inexperience. To caution and resolution, the road is easy and plain ; to headlong confidence, full of precipices. Fix now once for all one general resolution, and it will be your safety. Resolve under all temptations to keep the track of virtue. In particular places it may be discouraging ; yet it is the only road to true happiness : in particular places it may be perplexed, but if you carefully consult those monitors, whom you will meet with upon every difficulty

“ difficulty to direct you — I mean the
 “ days appropriated to reflexion in the
 “ ordinances of religion—you either will
 “ not stray, or ^{not} continue long, out of the
 “ true path. Passion, and lust and evil ex-
 “ amples will be here and there tempt-
 “ ing you into apparently smother and
 “ more delightful roads.—Believe not
 “ their suggestions; there is fraud in
 “ their allurements; and destruction in
 “ the paths they show you. Go on then,
 “ and quit yourselves like men, and
 “ the grace of God attend you, without
 “ which your resolutions can do you no
 “ service!” *

IV.

* CONFIRMATION was used by the apostles (as we
 read. Acts vi. 6. 8. 17. 19. 6. Heb. vi. 2.) to convey the
 gifts of the holy spirit to baptized believers; and, as
 the graces of the same spirit, though not in the same
 proportion, are always necessary to a christian life, we
 may piously believe, that God will be still pleased to
 sanctify so important an office with a considerable por-
 tion of his blessing.

IV. IT were well, if the office of moral instruction ended here. But mankind want it in every stage. Some, in spite of all moral provisions, come unprincipled into life: others, carried away by their passions, or entangled in the engagements of business, forget or neglect the duties of their being. The first want instruction; the latter admonition. What is then to be done? Should they be left to perish in the error of their ways? Is the loss of creatures, designed for happiness, of so little consequence? Or is advice of no service, where a man's own reason is disregarded? What foundation have we for such an opinion? Is not advice and instruction found useful in life, upon a thousand occasions of daily occurrence? The reason of one man may see further than another's; it may throw in new views, or place known truths in a clearer and more convincing light. Men may be better disposed for reflexi-
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on in some states, and times, and places, than others. And as they would not probably put themselves, or would not at least properly persevere, in such improving situations, if left wholly to themselves; would it not be of advantage, to have some stated occasions, appointed by sufficient authority, as checks upon thoughtlessness and dissipation, and calls to serious and useful reflexion?

CERTAINLY it would: nothing has a clearer foundation in reason, than the consecration of certain seasons, places, and other outward circumstances, as means and instruments of keeping up a sense of virtue and religion in the earth.

PARTICULARLY — (for this point must not be passed over slightly —) though the SABBATH be not of human appointment, yet we find, upon examination, a wonderful fitness and propriety in it to answer the above important purposes.

IT

IT forms such an interchange of rest and labour, as the exigences of life manifestly require. As six hours, in the smaller revolutions of morning and evening, seem to be fixed by nature and general custom for labour, and the seventh for refreshment; so, in the larger circle of weeks, the seventh day bears a natural and agreeable proportion to the labours of the six preceding days. It recruits the body, too frail a fabrick to bear the wastes of an unvaried round of fatigue. It diversifies time, which would otherwise tire by its sameness and uniformity. It makes a comfortable and salutary variety. The industrious bear their toils under the soothing prospect of it; they forget them in the grateful relaxation it affords. Released from the chains of business, they are, as it were, rescued from a state of bondage: the sweat and pollution and heaviness of the anxious week are laid aside; the heart feels lighter; the spirits flow more briskly;

ly ; the body acquires fresh health and vigour, and the soul opens and expands and indulges its natural taste in thought and reflexion.

SUCH happy effects has the christian institution of the SABBATH.* It carries health

* WITH regard to the Divine institution of the sabbath, these three things are clear—I. It was appointed by Almighty God to commemorate the universal mercy of creation. Gen. ii. 2. Exod. xx. 8.—II. It was appointed to be observed besides by the Jews, in commemoration of their deliverance out of Egypt. Deut. v. 15.—III. The first day of the week was kept by the apostles, in commemoration of the christian redemption from sin, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. John xx. 19. Acts xx. 7. i. Cor. xvi. 2. Rev. i. 9.

Now the usual questions upon this subject admit of a very easy and clear solution. To commemorate the blessing of creation, is now, and ever will be, a duty incumbent upon mankind, and, wherever men have the means of knowing the Divine appointment, they are obliged to devote the sabbath to all its proper purposes of holiness, under the peril of Divine displeasure ; and, as long as the resurrection of Christ is useful to the world, so long will it be necessary to keep some day holy in commemoration of that blessing.

BUT what right had the apostles to change the day

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health and comfort and refreshment in its revolutions. The mind shares with the body in the pleasing effects, and has room and leisure, in this state of ease, to reflect upon the concerns of a future life, and to form resolutions for the better management of the present.

BUT may not individuals be left to their own meditation and reflexion upon such occasions? Has not God made every man sufficiently wise to serve himself in all affairs of immediate concern
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from the seventh to the first day of the week? They acted under the authority of God, and what they taught and practis'd *as a part of christianity*, is as much the will of God, as any thing immediately appointed by himself.

BUT there is not (it is said,) any express law or precept, in the gospel, for the alteration. Yet we have what is equivalent; we have St. Paul's authority (Col. ii. 16) that the Jewish sabbath is no longer in force, and we find in the texts above-mentioned that he, as well as the other apostles, observed the first day as a day of religious worship; and therefore the first day *alone* must be the *christian* sabbath, i. e. the day of commemorating the creation, and redemption, of the latter of which the Jewish deliverance was but a type.

to him? — It is certain, we must take ourselves, just as it has pleased God to make us; and it is as certain, that we find ourselves in our present state universally incapable of instructing ourselves in any useful points of knowledge. There is a certain maturity of time and age, before which we are not qualified for the business of our present life: some are never qualified to be their own guides, even in these things: yet in these, there is common sense and general experience and plain observation to direct us. But the concerns of religion are of an abstracted nature. Few or none are capable of tracing them out by the force of their own natural understanding. At least—and this amounts to the same thing—the generality of mankind are prevented by pleasures or worldly affairs from employing their reason in this necessary enquiry. And want of principle has the same effect, whether it springs from ignorance, or inattention.

THIS shows the necessity of the institution of the christian MINISTRY.* If you examine the institution in the theory

* THERE are great differences of opinion with regard to the origin and claims of church power.

1. SOME suppose, that *every man* has a right to assume the office, who *has* or *pretends* to have, an inward call. 2. Others think, that any number of men have a right to *form themselves* into a congregation and to *disolve* it; to *elect* a minister and to *discharge* him, at *their own arbitrary will and discretion*. 3. Others vest the right of appointing ministers solely in the *civil magistrate*. 4. Others suppose, that there has been a *regular succession* of ministers since the first establishment of the gospel, wholly independent of the people and civil magistrate. —What has employed volumes, cannot be discussed fully within the compass of a small note: but a few leading principles will be of use.

THE first notion is grounded on a few texts of scripture grossly misunderstood, and tends to introduce universal disorder. Prophets were formerly empowered to work *miracles* in proof of their heavenly call. And, as none pretend now a days to confirm their mission in this manner, it is plain, we have no way of distinguishing upon this principle between a real and pretended call. Upon this principle then, every one, who thinks that he has an ability to officiate in Divine things, has a right to do so. Observe now the consequence; let in this notion

theory, nothing can be conceived more useful in human nature. The dispersing and blending with the mass of mankind

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tion upon any civil society; give every one a right to direct and govern in a state, according as he has presumption to think himself qualified for the office. What competitions, violences, and distractions, what a chaos of jarring interests and factions would ensue, may be conceived by the commonest understanding. Now if God designed there should be order, decency and peace in the church, we may easily suppose that he did not found it—if a thing can be said to be founded—upon a direct principle of disunion.

THE second notion is built upon no texts of scripture, that I know of, is attended with the same evils as the first, and has one peculiar evil of its own. It tends to introduce that mean, timid, fawning spirit which a dependent state generally produces, and which is greatly unworthy of the manly office of instructing a corrupt world.

THE third gives the magistrate a power over conscience, which scripture and reason plainly disavow.

THE fourth claims powers inconsistent with the civil rights of mankind.

THE church of England, with her usual temper, has adopted every thing christian and useful in these schemes, without admitting their inconveniences. It is a glaring

offence

a sufficient number of men, who, by their course of studies, generally have or should have some extent of knowledge

offence to have teachers of religion, without a real sense of it in themselves—accordingly the church requires every candidate to profess an inward call, i. e. a real resolution of discharging his office with integrity; and, what is more, to produce a testimonial of his abilities, and of his good behaviour for such a time as supposes a settled habit. 2. But there is danger lest the clergy should be corrupt and partial to one another—accordingly, she allows the laity to object to an unworthy candidate, and she is ready, as far as the laws of the land permit her, to punish any immoral hypocrite who has found means to creep into her bosom in spite of all these precautions, 3. Lest magistrates should corrupt religion, she claims a divine commission. And, 4. lest this claim should introduce a mad spirit of independence; she acknowledges herself obliged to the magistrate for her civil privileges.

THE theory is unexceptionably good: the errors, we have reason to complain of, lie in the administration, or, in other words, in the common corruption of human nature.

IT is indeed the plan laid down in the Holy Scriptures.

For 1. Ministers must be *men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.* Acts vi. 3. — 2. *They must have a good report of them which are without.* i. Tim. iii. 7.—

3. *They,*

ledge, and elevation of taste and sentiment, above the common level, must naturally be of use in civilizing and improving

3. *They, as well as every other soul must be subject to the higher powers.* Rom. xiii. 1. — 4. Their commission is from God, as I shall show at large, as being the principal point in dispute.

It is a general maxim, applied by St. Paul to the ministry of Christ himself. *No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: So also, says he, Christ glorified not himself, to be made a high priest, but he that said unto him, thou art my son, to day have I begotten thee.* Heb. v. 4, 5. Accordingly we read that he undertook not the office till he was called. Luke iii. 23. And as he was sent by the Father, even so sent he his apostles. John xx. 21. He promised to be with them unto the end of the world. Mat. xxviii. 20. Now as Christ knew they were not to live to the end of the world; he must mean, with them and their successors to the end of the world. Who then are these successors? The apostles themselves tell us in their practice, that they considered the appointment as belonging to themselves. They filled up the place of Judas with Matthias. Acts i. 23. They appointed deacons upon the encrease of the church. *Look ye out, said they to the body of believers, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over the business.*

proving life. And, if you examine fact, though fact will not always answer theory, where human corruption can

Acts vi. 3. *St. Paul ordained elders in every church.*
 Acts xiv. 23. *He left Titus in Crete to ordain elders in every city.* Tit. i. 5. *He gave the same commission to Timothy.* ii. Tim. ii. 2. *The things which thou hast heard of ME, the same commit thou to FAITHFUL men, who shall be able to TEACH OTHERS ALSO.* The establishment was the same in all the churches. i. Cor. vii. 17. xi. 16. xiv. 33.

I CONTENT myself with these few proofs, meaning to enter no further into the dispute than is necessary to support the principles of the above discourse.

BUT how can we be assured, it is said, of such a succession? Very easily, by authentic history; or, if you want a shorter way, by the present existence of the christian ministry, which is as good a proof of a succession of ministers from the establishment of the gospel, as the present age is a proof of a chain of successive generations from the foundation of the world.

BUT where was this succession, it is asked, in the times of Popish corruption? If the church of Rome was then a true church, what right had we to quit her communion; if a corrupt church, how could she deliver down a pure and untainted succession? The answer is very ready: the succession of ministers is an establishment
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can interfere, yet you will find, that the institution has its real advantages. Knowledge is actually more generally diffused than it ever was before. It is no longer confined (as it was among the ancients) to ostentatious affluence and curious retirement. *The poor have the gospel preached unto them*, and the great are taught without the debasing fear of their displeasure. There is not a peasant, who knows not more of the principles of sound religion, than the wisest philosopher of antiquity. And though the cultivation of other useful parts of knowledge be not confined to the ministers of religion, yet it were to be wished in common justice, that their revilers would but consider, who first kindled

of discipline, peace, and order: the graces attending it are the free gift of God, and depend not upon human corruption. *The scribes and pharisees sat in Moses's seat*, our Lord acknowledged Mat. xxii. 2. at the same time, that he meant to reform their corruptions.

See Potter's Church Government.

kindled up the lamp of knowledge, that spreads so much useful light upon the world, and whose unnoticed labours are devoted still to feed and support it. Were even religion out of the question, it would be useful to have a body of men devoted to the cultivation of knowledge—but as religion also is to be taught, the appropriation is the less to be envied and traduced.

BUT it is hard, you will say, that mankind should depend upon their fellow-creatures for instruction; upon men *of like passions with themselves*, who may convert this distinguished privilege to the corruptest of purposes.

IT is true; and GOD has provided a remedy against this danger, in his WRITTEN WORD.* This, regularly read in the ears of all the people, acquaints
all

* EVERY one, who knows any thing, knows we are indebted for our learning to the Greek and Latin
tongues,

all conditions with their respective duties. It is a *written law* because all other means are ineffectual; tradition, like

tongues. What else could have made foreign and dead languages in such request among us? What could have kept in being and handed them down to our times, through so many dark ages, in which the world was wasted and disfigured by wars and violence? What but a regard to the Holy Scriptures and theological writings of the fathers and doctors of the church? And in fact, do we not find that the learning of those times was solely in the hands of ecclesiastics, that they alone lighted the lamp in succession one from another, and transmitted it down to after ages; and that ancient books were collected and preserved in their colleges and seminaries, when all love and remembrance of polite arts and studies was extinguished among the laity, whose ambition entirely turned to arms?

AND who are they that encouraged and produced the restoration of arts and polite learning? What share had the minute philosophers in these affairs? *Matthias Corvinus King of Hungary, Alphonsus King of Naples, Cosmus de Medicis, Picus of Mirandula*, and other Princes and great men, famous for learning themselves, and for encouraging it in others with a munificent liberality, were neither Turks nor Gentiles nor minute philosophers. Who was it that transplanted and revived the

Greek

like sound, vanishing into nothing in its remoter circles; and reason speaking differently in different men, and in no case comprehending the full wants of nature. And it is the *word of God*, because nothing else carries authority in its precepts. A

Greek language and authors, and with them all polite arts, and literature in the west? Was it not chiefly *Bessarion* a cardinal, *Marcus Musurus* an Archbishop, *Theodore Gaza* a private clergyman? Has there been a greater and more renowned patron, and restorer of elegant studies in every kind, since the days of *Augustus Caesar*, than *Leo* the tenth Pope of *Rome*? Did any writers approach the purity of the *classics* nearer than the cardinals *Bembus* and *Sadoletus*, or than the bishops *Jorvius* and *Vida*? Not to mention an endless number of ingenious ecclesiastics, who flourished on the other side of the *Alps* in the golden age (as the *Italians* call it) of *Leo* the tenth, and wrote, both in their own language and the *Latin*, after the best models of antiquity. It is true, this first recovery of learning preceded the reformation, and lighted the way to it: but the religious controversies, which ensued, did wonderfully propagate and improve it in all parts of christendom. And surely the Church of *England* is; at least, as well calculated for the encouragement of learning, as that of *Rome*.

Berkley's Min. Philos. Dial. 5. Chap. 23, 25.

A PUBLIC service (to proceed in our detail) supposes the appropriation of PLACE* for the discharge of it.—And it is certain, that places should be dedicated to religion under such circumstances of decency and solemnity, as tend to promote a serious sense of piety and virtue. Pray, observe the close connexion between the two parts of man, the soul and body; and judge from thence, what we ought to think and do in this respect. Do you not find that gay and light and ludicrous sights dissipate your mind in wildness and extravagance?

* THE primitive christians had particular places appropriated to the worship of God, in as solemn a manner, as the persecuted state of the church then admitted of. I content myself with one instance. *What?* (says St. Paul reproving some disorders among the Corinthians) *have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God?* i. Cor. xi. 22. There is a distinction visibly made here between their usual places of abode and the church of God, and this plainly proves the appropriation of religious places of worship in that early afflicted distracted state of gospel.

vagance? Look now on the contrary at some solemn scene; and you find every wilder transport of passion hushed to silence. A vein of gravity overspreads you: reason reassumes her empire: you wonder to find yourself such an altered creature. Such an effect has outward things upon the mind of man! Such an effect must order and decency have in places of Divine worship: they tend to produce those reverent and awful sentiments, in which true piety and virtue must habitually and effectually subsist.

AND lastly, as the means of grace, for the reasons already given, should be *free and open* to the bulk of christians until they voluntarily renounce the privilege, so there should be some higher rite of peculiar grace and sanctity for the more considerate sort, who visibly walk in the spirit as well as profession of the gospel.

THIS provision is also made for us in
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the sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER,* where the strongest resolutions are required, the highest assistances of grace are conveyed, and where every worthy communicant has the unspeakable comfort of renewing and confirming his title to the covenant of mercy and salvation.

LET

* THE perpetual obligation of celebrating the Lord's supper is to be demonstrated in the following manner. *It is the communion of the blood and body of Christ.* i. Cor. x. 16. As long then as it is incumbent on christians to keep up their interest in his sacrifice, so long is this ordinance to be kept up in the church. It is also a *perpetual memorial* of his sufferings; *for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, (says St. Paul) ye do shew the Lord's death* TILL HE COME. i. Cor. xi. 26. And lastly, if we saw no other reason, we have the command of Christ himself. Mat. xx. 26. The command of a superior wants no reasons to give it authority. When we disclaim obedience to the command, we disclaim our title to the name and rights of servants and disciples.

THERE is one thing urged against this and all other christian rites, which, though it makes a great figure in declamation, may be refuted in a few words. The sabbath, it is said, baptism, eucharist, and the orders of the ministry, are adopted with some alteration from the Jewish

LET us now put all these things together ; and, though they form too slight a view to do justice to the important subject, yet they give us better notions upon it, than many are acquainted with, in the giddiness of inattention and the peevishness of party contradiction.

CONSIDER then mankind obliged by the command of GOD to assemble and associate together in amicable and friendly societies, under certain modes of general utility, and nothing can be conceived better adapted to all the purposes of their being. Behold them assembling from their various occupations ; from a dispersed, unconnected, and almost discordant

Jewish worship, and belong not therefore to the spiritual gospel. I answer, whatever Christ and his apostles taught and practised *as a part of christianity* must be received as such, if we allow their Divine authority. If we admit not this rule, we may disclaim one half of the gospel, I mean the moral precepts ; for they were taught before, by Jews and Heathens.

cordant state, and recognizing themselves as fellow-creatures,—as fellow travellers to one common happiness, in subjection to a common master who knows no respect of persons—And what do you think is the genuine effect of such an act? Does it not wear off that reserve, and savageness and asperity of manners, which solitude is apt to produce? Does it not remove the distastes and jealousies, contracted in the competitions of life? Does it not soften the various passions of rank and condition, the pride of greatness, and the envy of poverty? And in their stead introduce mutual acquaintance, endearment, and all the generous effusions of benevolent affection? — A public service, properly conducted, inculcates virtue in all its offices. Confession impresses a sense of the baseness of sin, of the weakness of nature, and the necessity of Divine grace. Prayer petitions for every virtue we want, and against every sin and temptation we

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ought to shun—by employing the wishes of the heart it tends to beget firm and lasting resolutions. Intercession considers mankind under the tenderest relations, and by this means strengthens and improves benevolence. Thanksgiving, reminding us of the Divine goodness, fixes duty upon the most generous foundation, that of gratitude. In short, a public service removes all the inconveniences of the present unequal state: the busy are called from their cares, and the gay from their amusements: the great are humbled, and the poor raised to the laudable ambition of rational creatures: the weak are encouraged, the virtuous confirmed; the ignorant are taught, the careless admonished, and the wicked reprov'd. The word of God holds up an impartial mirror to all men alike: it speaks one common language, without flattery, without passion, without prejudice. It speaks to men under the happiest advantages—in the absence of temptati-

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ons—in the ebb of passion—in the calm season of stillness and recollection. It speaks, recommended by outward circumstances adapted to the gravity of sentiment and disposition it means to excite.

IV. SINCE, then, outward institutions are of such use, what shall we say to those, who disclaim them, because they do not always produce their genuine effects?

HAVE rites and forms and all the machinery of bodily worship been multiplied in some ages to the exclusion of true and substantial virtue? It is true, the Romish church, availing herself of that ignorance which the savage conquerors of the Roman empire introduced, did delude the world with infinite inventions of this kind. But what objection can this be, in an enquiring age, against a church, which fundamentally encourages enquiry, and pleads only for rites of

acknowledged and approved utility? Universal practice is for some rites: a multiplicity, like excess of fuel, may smother the flame of religion; but some are necessary to feed and support it.

BUT, several members, it is said, live unimproved under the means of grace—But does this prove the means of grace to be universally useless?—What blessing of God is there, which is not abused? Are not cloaths perverted to the purposes of pride and ostentation? Do not many convert meat and drink to the purposes of luxury and intemperance?

RELIGION means not to overrule but regulate our freedom: partial remedies are better than none at all: if there be wickedness and impiety in the world under the utmost advantages of religion, if many men do, notwithstanding, live mindless of their duty to God and their fellow-creatures, we should gratefully consider, what the case would be, were there

there no means of calling these neglected truths to their remembrance.

“ BUT I have, (methinks I hear one say,) for many years attended the services of the church, and I never found any thing solid and substantial in her services. I found nothing there of the new-birth, that heart-felt sensation, that forming of the Lord Jesus in the heart, in which true religion consists.”

Now the new new-birth means nothing but practising christian virtues upon christian motives and principles. Let me then ask the man, who found no solid improvement in religion; whose fault was it? Can he fix the imputation upon the offices of religion?—There is not one of them, which has not a moral, or, what means the same thing, a spiritual tendency.

DID you acquiesce in baptism, as giving you a right to salvation, without any care of practising the duties of a christian

christian life? The church taught you a quite different doctrine, and told you, “ that baptism doth represent unto us
“ our profession, which is to follow the
“ example of our Saviour Christ, and
“ be made like unto him; that as he
“ died and rose again for us, so should
“ we, who are baptized, *die from sin,*
“ *and rise again unto righteousness,* con-
“ tinually mortifying all our evil and
“ corrupt affections, and *daily proceed-*
“ *ing in all virtue and godliness of*
“ *living.*”

DID you consider confirmation as an empty insignificant rite? The church supposes, that she laid then upon you a very strong moral engagement, a deliberate solemn promise, “ *that you did with your own mouth and consent openly ratify and confirm your baptismal covenant, and promise, by the grace of God to endeavour faithfully to observe it.*”

DID you rely upon a customary un-
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meaning attendance upon the devotions of the church? The error is your own: she tells you, that you came there to confess your sins with an *humble, lowly, penitent and obedient heart*, and with a sincere desire, “*that the rest of your life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last you may come to eternal joy.*”

DID you approach the greater solemnity of the church, the sacrament of the Lord's body, without proper sentiments of faith and devotion? — The church warned you against the abuse, and directed you not to approach it but *with full purpose of amendment of life.*

DID we but attend to the instructions of the church, we should scarce want any other assistance (the scriptures only excepted) in a spiritual life.

THERE is not a truth, relating to God our neighbour and ourselves, which is not inculcated there, and that too in a simplicity of language adapted to every capacity. Having then such an excellent

lent and instructive form, let us but adorn it by a suitable conversation; and we shall be sufficiently wise unto salvation. The church furnishes us with an instructive prayer for this purpose also. *Almighty God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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THE END.

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